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Current global and national trends and challenges and their impact on education

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

After a period of uneven recovery, the slowdown in global economic growth is expected to continue. Developing countries are increasingly an important source of stability and continue to be the major drivers of growth. However, major risks to both economic and social development persist, including an overreliance on short-term policy measures, exchange rate volatility and a renewed widening of global imbalances. A lack of decent work opportunities and rising food prices continue to pose challenges to many countries, straining national budgets and putting pressure on household disposable incomes. In developing countries and particularly in the least developed countries, those trends could constitute a major setback to sustainable development efforts, in particular the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. Against that backdrop, the present report provides an analysis of the impact of current global trends on the internationally agreed development goals in regard to education and makes a number of recommendations to deal with those challenges.

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Contents

	Page
I. Introduction	3
II. Global overview of emerging trends and challenges	3
A. The global economic outlook	3
B. Job insecurity	4
C. Global food prices	4
D. Migration patterns	5
E. Environmental crises and climate change	5
F. Armed conflicts	6
G. Advances in information and communications technology	6
H. Development finance	7
III. Impact of the current trends and challenges on education	7
A. Domestic spending on education	7
B. Income shocks and the protection of household investment in education	9
C. Food insecurity, nutrition and learning achievement	10
D. Migration and investment in education	11
E. Environmental crises, education for sustainable development and climate change	12
F. Armed conflict and education for conflict mitigation and resolution	13
G. Recent innovations in information and communications technology and education	15
IV. Managing the impact of current global and national trends and challenges in regard to education	15
A. Securing stable education expenditure	15
B. Building resilience to income shocks	16
C. Developing skills for twenty-first century challenges and opportunities	17
D. Promoting migration for education	18
E. Revitalizing the global commitment to education	18
F. Peacebuilding through education	19

I. Introduction

1. The present report provides an analysis of current global trends and challenges and their impact on increasing access to and improving the quality of education. In addition to recent developments in the global economy, the report highlights key trends with implications for education systems, including the following: job insecurity and rising inequalities; food insecurity; migration patterns; climate change and disaster risks; conflict and human insecurity; and technological innovations. The report includes action-oriented recommendations for managing both the short- and long-term effects of those trends on education and proposes opportunities for maintaining and improving progress towards education and learning for all.

2. Section II of the present report gives a global overview of current economic and social conditions, with a particular focus on developing countries. Section III provides an analysis of the impact of those trends and presents ideas and proposals on how the challenges they pose might be turned into opportunities for education systems. Section IV offers recommendations that are considered crucial in overcoming the negative impact of current trends on education, with a view to informing effective policy actions.

3. The present report should be read in conjunction with the forthcoming report of the Secretary-General for the annual ministerial review on the theme "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education".

II. Global overview of emerging trends and challenges

A. Global economic outlook

4. After a year of steady but uneven improvement, global economic growth began to decelerate in mid-2010, signalling a fragile recovery in 2011 and beyond. A rapid shift from fiscal stimulus to austerity in major economies could have a negative impact on the growth of gross domestic product (GDP) and public spending in those countries. Moreover, it would jeopardize the ongoing recovery and widen global imbalances, which in turn could feed more instability into the global economy.

5. Robust but slower economic growth in many developing countries continues to drive the global recovery, contributing to more than half of the world's economic expansion since late 2009. In contrast to previous economic recessions, many developing countries, particularly emerging economies, were better prepared and were able to implement stimulus spending by using ample fiscal space and vast foreign-exchange reserves accumulated in the years before the crisis. That boosted domestic demand and facilitated a relatively quick recovery from the global downturn. Those countries have also led the recovery of international trade, building on South-South linkages among developing countries and, in turn, benefiting smaller economies in Asia and Latin America. By late 2010, developing country trade and industrial output had climbed to above pre-crisis levels.

6. Nonetheless, formidable challenges remain, especially for the least developed countries, for which the global crisis exacerbated ongoing obstacles to economic

and social development efforts. Many of those countries continue to face special political and security situations, and their rate of recovery in GDP growth is expected to be well below the annual average of 5 per cent achieved from 2004 to 2007. Whether growth in other developing countries can be sustained is also uncertain. Despite strengthened South-South trade linkages, developing countries remain highly dependent on demand in developed countries for their exports. Access to capital flows and official development assistance is also conditioned by financial circumstances in developed countries. More recently, the surge in private capital flows to many developing countries has caused upward pressure on their currencies and could lead to domestic asset bubbles.¹

B. Job insecurity

7. Between 2007 and 2009, 30 million jobs were lost worldwide as a result of the financial crisis. Global unemployment remains at record highs for the third year since the start of the crisis. Despite a rebound in employment in Asia and Latin America, the global economy will still need to create at least another 22 million new jobs, 8 million of them in developing countries, in order to return to pre-crisis levels of employment. The longer-term consequences are already becoming visible, as the share of the structurally or long-term unemployed has increased significantly in many, mostly developed countries since 2007.

8. In developing countries the situation threatens to exacerbate the lack of decent work that existed before the crisis. Despite the rebound from brief drops in employment in developing countries, vulnerable employment, underemployment and the downward pressure on wages continue to pose serious challenges there. Constrained household incomes could reduce household investment in children's education and health, which might slow down the rate of progress made in recent years on poverty reduction and social development.

9. Youth were vulnerable to unemployment even before the recent crisis, and their ongoing exclusion from labour markets, in developing and developed countries alike, is a mounting global concern. At the end of 2009, there were an estimated 81 million unemployed young people worldwide. They are almost three times more likely to be unemployed as adults. Those figures do not take into consideration the large number of young people who are too discouraged to seek work and therefore are not captured in official unemployment figures.

C. Global food prices

10. Prices for most agricultural commodities have been increasing since the second half of 2010 due to a number of factors, including unexpected shortfalls in supply caused by adverse weather events, policy responses by some exporting countries and fluctuations in currency markets. Higher food prices affect countries differently depending on whether they are net exporters or importers of food. Because the majority of developing countries are net food importers, populations in those countries are affected disproportionately by price increases.

¹ *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2011* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.11.II.C.2).

11. The rise in food prices occurs at a time when the number of undernourished people in the world remains near the 1 billion mark, despite a brief decline in 2010 for the first time since 1995. That decline is largely attributable to economic growth in developing countries in 2010 and a temporary fall in international food prices in 2009. Food prices remain volatile, however, and are estimated to have pushed an additional 44 million people into poverty in developing countries since June 2010. The rise in food prices has posed new challenges for the marginalized, including persons with disabilities, by further limiting their access to food and basic nutrition.

D. Migration patterns

12. After a long period of steady increases in international migration, global migration flows contracted in 2008 and 2009.²

13. During this period, a number of host countries implemented policies to provide incentives to facilitate the return of migrant workers to their countries of origin. However, large-scale returns of migrants have not taken place. A majority of migrants are well integrated in their countries of residence, and their economic prospects at home are rarely better than those in their countries of residence.

14. Migrant workers have been hard hit by rising levels of unemployment in most countries, partly because they are concentrated in economic sectors, such as construction, manufacturing and tourism, that have been adversely affected by the economic downturn and partly because they tend to face discrimination in labour markets. Migrants' job insecurity is often compounded by limited access to social protection programmes. Despite the fact that migrants have fared disproportionately worse than their local peers in many countries, the crisis has contributed to a resurgence of xenophobia and thus underscored the importance of taking effective measures to protect migrant rights.

15. In 2009, remittances to low- and middle-income countries fell for the first time since 1980, reaching \$316 billion, or \$20 billion less than in 2008. Decreased remittances were most pronounced for migrant populations concentrated in the developed countries that were hit hardest by the global financial and economic crisis, such as migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean working in Spain or the United States of America. However, remittances have been more resilient to the effects of the crises than other types of financial flows, including development finance, and are predicted to rebound in 2011.

E. Environmental crises and climate change

16. The challenges posed by environmental crises, including climate change and natural disasters, increasingly add considerable stress to societies, ranging from changing weather patterns that threaten food production to rising sea levels that increase the risk of catastrophic flooding. It is a complex global challenge intertwined with vulnerabilities caused by poverty and rapid urbanization, ecosystem decline and unsustainable economic growth patterns. The flooding in Pakistan and the earthquake in Haiti in 2010 underscored the multiple

² Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *International Migration Outlook 2010* (Paris, 2010).

vulnerabilities faced by communities in the event of natural disasters and their aftermath.

17. The increase in disaster risks caused by environmental crises tends to have the most devastating impact in developing countries. The effects of climate change magnify the uneven social and geographic distribution of disaster risk, increasing the risks already faced by the poor and further amplifying poverty. Least developed countries and small island developing States are especially vulnerable, given that they rely heavily on climate-sensitive sectors and have limited capacities for resilience and high levels of poverty and unemployment.

F. Armed conflict

18. In 2009, 80 countries faced deadlock, tension or armed conflict as they sought to address longer-term development challenges, 19 of which were on the agendas of the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission. Before the financial crisis hit, conflict-affected States already lacked the resources to adequately respond to economic and environmental shocks. In those contexts, civilians are confronted with the erosion of central authority and the rule of law, internal displacement through forced migration, the destruction of infrastructure and services, and high levels of violence against women and children. In addition, children and youth are often forcibly recruited into combat.

19. The increased duration of many of those conflicts is one of the central challenges to achieving sustainable development. Over the last decade, more than 2 million children died as a direct result of armed conflict, and at least 6 million children were seriously injured or permanently disabled. Furthermore, 12 of the 25 countries with the lowest adult literacy rates are in a state of conflict or reconstruction. Beyond those effects, prolonged armed conflicts can undermine economic growth and reinforce high levels of poverty, with one study estimating that civil war tends to reduce economic growth by 2.3 per cent a year.³

G. Advances in information and communications technology

20. Information and communications technology (ICT) increasingly underpins most human activity, making its availability and use critical to the advancement of sustainable development. Cheap and easy access to new digital resources has accelerated the diffusion of best-practice technologies. There are currently more than 5 billion mobile cellular subscriptions worldwide, and around 2 billion people have access to the Internet.⁴ Like mobile technology and the early Internet, broadband is set to be the next transformational technology for the sector. Broadband networks act as enablers more than previous technologies by bringing knowledge-sharing and education services to people wherever they live and by leveraging opportunities for lifelong learning and training.

21. However, approximately 5 billion out of the 7 billion world's inhabitants have no direct access to the Internet. While more basic needs might take precedence in many poor communities, equitable access to ICT and digital resources can expand

³ Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁴ See www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/material/FactsFigures2010.pdf.

users' knowledge and promote poverty reduction. There is now widespread evidence that poor communities can benefit from access to ICT that helps to increase the ease of communications and financial transfers, reduce transaction costs, integrate local and global markets, expand human capital accumulation and empower people.

H. Development finance

22. Although official development assistance flows continued to rise in 2009, members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee as a whole did not meet their aid volume targets in 2010. The most recent data for Development Assistance Committee donors show that total aid reached almost \$120 billion in 2009, or 0.31 per cent of combined donor country gross national income (GNI). No intermediate targets have been adopted for 2011 and beyond, leaving the United Nations goal, 0.7 per cent of developed countries' GNI to official development assistance, as the remaining applicable benchmark. By that measure, the delivery gap in 2009 was \$153 billion.⁵ That is despite the fact that the impact of the financial and food crises increased the need for some developing countries to secure substantial additional financial support. Delivery on aid targets for least developed countries, in particular, has been disappointing.

23. Concerns persist about how austerity measures in developed countries will have an impact on future aid commitments, with several bilateral donors recently announcing specific cuts to basic education within their development finance programmes. Although developed countries account for the majority of global development finance, other actors, such as emerging donors and providers of South-South cooperation, are becoming major contributors to international development efforts. Total net development assistance from non-Development Assistance Committee donors was estimated to be between \$12 billion and \$14 billion in 2008, which represents between 9 and 10 per cent of global official development assistance.⁶ Private funding resources from major philanthropic foundations and non-governmental organizations continue to be important providers of international development assistance, although their portfolios are often dominated by the health sector and sectors other than education.

III. Impact of the current trends and challenges on education

A. Domestic spending on education

24. Fiscal pressures on Government budgets remain a source of concern for education financing in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis and the ongoing global recovery. Although education expenditure generally increased over the past decade in most developing countries, losses of revenue associated with lower growth or a deteriorating trade environment might translate into reduced public spending or unsustainable fiscal deficits. Because of decreased public revenue and pressure on budgets as a result of the crisis, developing countries could face a trade-off between

⁵ *The MDG Gap Task Force Report 2010: The Global Partnership for Development at a Critical Juncture* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.10.I.12).

⁶ OECD, *Beyond the DAC: the welcome role of other providers of development cooperation*. Available from www.oecd.org/dataoecd/58/24/45361474.pdf.

maintaining fiscal balance and pre-crisis levels of public expenditure on education. Although many Governments in developing countries have protected vital social sector budgets thus far, there is less certainty that post-crisis Government spending plans in education reflect pre-crisis commitments to the financing needs to achieve education and learning for all.

25. Real-time monitoring of education budgets is difficult, but a recent survey conducted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) of changes in education spending between 2009 and 2010 in 28 developing countries revealed that some Governments have revised their budget downward to reflect declines in revenue. In the survey, seven of the lowest income countries made cuts to education spending and six of the lower middle-income countries reported budget allocations for 2010 that were lower than spending levels in 2009.⁷ Looking ahead, planned fiscal adjustments that rely on spending cuts could increase the trend in many countries, both developing and developed.

26. Decreased education expenditure could jeopardize progress made by many developing countries in increasing enrolment levels since 2000. An analysis of global data indicates that instead of the pre-crisis prediction that the number of out-of-school children would fall from 72 million to 29 million between 2010 and 2015, the number is more likely to plateau at around 56 million as a result of the crisis and its impact on financing for education.⁸ In general, where education budgets were cut as a result of the crisis, financing for post-primary levels of education suffered the most. Even though expenditure on primary education appeared relatively protected, an estimated 6.2 million additional classrooms are still needed in primary and pre-primary education in order to accommodate the increase in enrolment required to achieve the goals set by the Education for All movement.⁹

27. The capacity of developing countries to finance increased recruitment of trained, motivated teachers and investment in infrastructure is also affected by the current slowdown in the global economy. As a result, some countries have overrelied on poorly qualified, poorly paid teachers with few or no opportunities for professional development, resulting in poor teacher morale, absenteeism and high turnover of well-qualified staff. More than 1.9 million teachers are still needed globally for the achievement of universal primary education, more than half of whom are required in sub-Saharan Africa.⁷

28. In countries where school enrolments are rising rapidly, marginal or negative growth of education expenditure can translate into a reduction in per pupil spending. This not only impedes access but also exacerbates limited learning achievement in many education sectors. As highlighted in a recent UNESCO study of national education budgets, recent cuts to education in developing countries tend to be concentrated in areas that specifically affect its quality: textbooks, materials, school-based nutrition and health programmes.⁷ Because the most marginalized children often attend the poorest-quality schools, cuts to critical educational materials only

⁷ UNESCO, *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2011: The hidden crisis — Armed conflict and education* (Paris, 2011).

⁸ UNESCO, *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2010: Reaching the marginalized* (Paris, 2010).

⁹ UNESCO, *The Impact of the Global Financial and Economic Crisis on the Education Sector, No. 1: The Impact of the Crisis on Public Expenditure on Education — Findings from the UNESCO Quick Survey*, document ED/EPS/2009/PI/1.

add to their learning disadvantages. Rural children, most specifically rural girls and children with disabilities, represent the majority of those who are excluded from school.

29. Governments must plan for increases in the recurrent costs that occur as a result of a sustained push for investment in infrastructure and teacher recruitment. Levels of financing cannot be viewed in isolation; the efficiency and equity of public spending are also critical. Countries with accountable public expenditure management systems and multi-year, multisectoral planning systems are more likely to translate increased investment into real improvement.

B. Income shocks and the protection of household investment in education

30. The combined financial and food crises contributed to a decline in disposable incomes among households in one third of developing countries from 2008 to 2010, pushing poverty rates upward in comparison to pre-crisis forecasts.¹⁰ In order to cope with income shocks caused by job insecurity, decreases in labour income and rising commodity prices, previous crises have shown that poor households tend to cut back on education spending or withdraw their children from school. When households lose stable income, they may no longer be able to afford the direct costs of schooling. Increased opportunity costs might mean that children leave school in order to work to support their families. That locks families into vicious circles of poverty as children fall behind and, even if they return to school, face long-lasting learning gaps. Although not all of the effects of decreasing household incomes on education investment are straightforward, and demand for education sometimes increases during temporary periods of economic hardship, the overall effects remain harmful to children's education and general well-being.

31. Income shocks to poor households often have a disproportionate impact on the well-being of girls relative to that of boys, with particularly strong effects on their education. During economic downturns, girls' access to education and health services can deteriorate much more rapidly than the progress made during periods of economic growth. A recent World Bank analysis of human development indicators in 163 countries between 1980 and 2008 revealed that primary education completion rates plummet 29 per cent for girls and 22 per cent for boys (from the overall mean; all countries) during periods of economic contraction, and rise only 5 per cent for girls and 3 per cent for boys during economic accelerations.¹⁰ Female-to-male enrolment ratios for primary, secondary and tertiary education follow similar patterns, with ratios improving steadily but slowly during good times and dropping precipitously, particularly at the tertiary level, during bad times. Such gender-based effects on child schooling were greatest in developing countries.

32. The economic crisis and its impact on household incomes have increased demand for social protection schemes in developing and developed countries alike. By helping poor households manage risk without compromising long-term welfare, social protection programmes safeguard children's enrolment and educational attainment during periods of economic hardship. In addition to reducing destitution,

¹⁰ International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, *Global Monitoring Report 2010: The MDGs after the Crisis* (Washington, D.C., 2010).

social protection programmes such as employment-based safety nets and cash and food transfers provide incentives to struggling households to support children's education, health and nutrition.

33. Although the range and design of social protection programmes vary, there is widespread evidence that associates such programmes with positive effects on children's education, with a particularly strong impact on school enrolment and grade progression. They can be designed specifically to compensate households for the direct costs of attending school and buying related goods. Those can take the form of subsidies or grants to education and can either be offered on a universal basis or, more commonly, targeted to marginalized groups within the education system (including girls, children with disabilities and indigenous peoples). Similarly, scholarships that provide students from disadvantaged groups with conditional cash transfers reduce the opportunity costs of not participating in remunerated occupations, thus influencing higher enrolment and permanence rates in the school system.

34. In order to ensure that households can build their resilience and keep children in school over the long run, social protection programmes should be complemented by "second chance" and adult education opportunities as well as job search assistance. Programmes that build twenty-first century skills and offer technical and vocational education and training can help ensure that adults and youth who are out of work, underemployed or adapting to new work sectors maintain contact with labour markets. Technical and vocational education and training programmes are a fundamental ingredient to the transition of workers from informal, vulnerable sectors towards more productive, sustainable sectors linked to emerging "green" industries and the knowledge economy.

35. For youth in both developing and developed countries, failure in their first experience on the labour market is often difficult to make up and can expose them to lifelong reductions in earnings and well-being. In general, the effect is even more pronounced among young people from marginalized groups. Concerns about quality and relevance in basic education come as the demand for transferable twenty-first century skills, such as problem solving, information management and communication skills, is increasing. Although they hold great potential for linking youth to the world of work, traditional technical and vocational education and training systems are often considered second-rate, separate-track education, characterized by underinvestment and a lack of relevance. As part of a more general transformation in strengthening school-to-work transitions, technical and vocational education and training programmes and apprenticeships should be better integrated into general education curricula and designed with local labour market demands in mind.

C. Food insecurity, nutrition and learning achievement

36. The current volatility in food prices might force poor families to choose between their children's health and education. An increase in food prices is particularly lethal for poor households, which spend between 50 and 70 per cent of their incomes on food in many developing countries. Higher food prices can have an immediate impact on the level and diversity of food consumption in poor households and can lead to an increase in hunger and in the number of out-of-school children. Emerging evidence from the 2008 spike in food prices indicates that

children in developing countries decreased school attendance as a result of increased food-related expenses, with reduced education spending reported by almost half of the households surveyed in one country.

37. The effects of higher food prices have an impact not only on children's school attendance but also on the effectiveness of learning in the classroom. Short-term hunger, common in children who do not eat before going to school, results in difficulty concentrating and performing complex tasks, even if the child is otherwise well-nourished. Currently, an estimated 60 million children attend school hungry, about 40 per cent of them in Africa. In addition to the effects of short-term hunger, chronic undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies affect overall brain development and cognitive functions. Nutrition-based interventions, such as school feeding programmes, have been shown to reverse that. School feeding offers an incentive for households to send their children to school and receive an education, while simultaneously reducing short-term hunger and improving their learning potential.

38. Smallholder farmers and their families represent some 2 billion people, about one third of the global population, and are central to any solution to the current food crisis and to sustainable development efforts. Education and training for agricultural productivity is critical to supporting the livelihoods of rural households and ensuring more efficient and effective linkages with urban markets, where rises in food prices tend to have the strongest effect on households. Making training resources available to smallholder farmers in the near term to reduce their specific constraints will result in a serious boost to food production. In particular, training and technical education programmes on topics including market and price information, local seed multiplication, small-scale irrigation techniques and soil conservation schemes could create productivity gains in smallholder farming. Such training resources might reduce pressure on prices in local markets, thereby contributing to improvements in access for urban net food-buying families and, in turn, improvements in their nutritional status.

D. Migration and investment in education

39. Migrant remittances help fund education-related expenses in recipient countries. In some developing countries, as much as one quarter of remittance income has been shown to go towards education. Remittance flows are not only more resilient to economic shocks than other capital flows but are also more likely to benefit poor households directly. Families with migrants working abroad tend to be more likely to send their children to school, using cash from remittances to pay school fees and other costs. Recent research has also shown that once in school, the children in recipient households are more likely to progress through school without interruptions.¹¹ In addition to financial remittances, "social" remittances, the ideas, practices and social capital that flow back to families and communities in migrants' origin countries, can also bolster households' commitment to education and promote the expansion of local education infrastructure. At the same time, the emigration of a parent or guardian can have unintended effects on children, who often face long and sometimes indefinite periods of separation from important family members.

¹¹ United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2009: Overcoming barriers — Human mobility and development* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 09.III.B.1).

40. While migration often expands options for education and employment opportunities for individuals, it can also contribute to acute human resource shortages in communities of origin. A number of developing countries continue to see large proportions of their secondary- and tertiary-educated citizens, particularly those trained in health and education, emigrate to developed countries. The International Organization for Migration estimates that about 20,000 skilled professionals have left Africa each year since 1990.¹² The pull of skilled workers to better work opportunities could weaken developing countries' prospects for building successful education systems as well as prospects for national skills development.

41. Within countries, internal migration from rural to urban areas continues apace, in part because of the "urban advantage" in accessing jobs and services, including education. However, most urban growth is occurring in towns and cities where education systems are generally struggling to meet the demand of the existing population and access to newcomers is either restricted or generally of poor quality. National education plans have focused predominantly on reducing the urban/rural gap in access to and quality of education; it must be balanced by taking into consideration the widening divide between rich and poor children in many urban areas, where population growth is expanding most rapidly.

E. Environmental crises, education for sustainable development and climate change

42. Environmental crises profoundly affect the lives of millions of children each year, as they result in large-scale disruption to vulnerable communities and the delivery of public services, including education. Increases in the frequency and severity of crises caused by natural disasters and the effects of climate change expose children to a number of risks. As highlighted by a recent report of the United Nations Children's Fund on the impact of three recent environmental crises on children in small island developing States, the crises were associated with short- and medium-term increases in the risk of physical injury and death, displacement and separation from family, vector- and water-borne diseases of affected children, as well as general declines in well-being.

43. The most obvious and immediate impact of environmental crises on education is the disruption of children's educational progress, which can cause long-term learning gaps due to lost school hours and the destruction of infrastructure such as schools, roads, electricity and clean water supplies. In addition to restricting children's learning, damaged infrastructure compounds the post-disaster response since safe, secure schools are natural entry points for communities needing emergency shelter, nutrition and health care. The damage is not only physical but also economic and psychological. The economic impact is all too apparent in developing countries, where natural disasters can quickly destroy years of progress in expanding education and other public services. The psychological impact can be devastating and long-lasting, especially for young children who might not comprehend their cause.

44. Experiences from both developing and developed countries have shown that investments in disaster risk reduction through education can result in changes in

¹² International Organization for Migration, *Diaspora Dialogues* (Geneva, 2007).

perceptions and patterns of behaviour that reduce the risks and costs of environmental crises and produce long-term benefits. Participatory, hands-on learning exercises for disaster risk reduction have demonstrated particularly effective results in ensuring that children are prepared for the environmental crises their communities face. More generally, recent findings suggest that the inclusive education of girls and women is associated with reduced household vulnerability to death and injury during environmental crises. The United Nations Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 offers guidance on education for disaster risk reduction, prioritizing adherence to safe school construction standards, the integration of evacuation and emergency plans into learning activities and the promotion of environmental stewardship in relation to local ecosystems, as well as guidelines for education systems operating in post-disaster contexts.

45. Considering the anticipated risks from the effects of climate change on increasing environmental crises, education for sustainable development offers an opportunity to combat climate change by contributing to mitigation efforts and building capacities to increase community resilience. A focus on education for sustainable development in both developing and developed countries can promote a better understanding of local environments, change consumption and production patterns and help anticipate risks from climate change and other future development challenges. In the current global context in which the quality and relevance of education continues to gain urgency, for education for sustainable development to be effective, it should centre on the scientific literacy and problem-solving skills needed to cope with new environmental challenges.

46. Some Governments have begun integrating modules on climate change, disaster risk reduction and sustainable development into school curricula and informal learning programmes. Despite the advances being made, a lack of institutional, financial and technical capacities in both developing and developed countries continues to impede the full implementation of these components into education systems. In order to address that, a better evidence base is still needed on the most effective measures for mainstreaming climate change, disaster risk reduction and sustainable development into education systems.

F. Armed conflict and education for conflict mitigation and resolution

47. Over 40 per cent of the world's out-of-school children live in conflict-affected States, where traditional barriers to education: distance, language and school fees, are compounded by high levels of violence. Children in conflict-affected countries are twice as likely to die before their fifth birthday as children in other poor countries. The average duration of violent conflicts in low-income countries over the last decade was 12 years, creating devastating learning gaps for children unable to attend school safely. Increasingly, schools, schoolchildren and teachers are being targeted deliberately in conflict settings.⁷

48. Girls' physical security and access to quality education is especially threatened in conflict-affected States. The widespread, systematic use of sexual and gender-based violence against girls and women in these settings undermines not only their human rights and physical security but also their future potential to learn because of psychological trauma and stigmatization. In several current conflicts, girls' schools have been targeted specifically by armed groups opposed to gender equality and the

empowerment of women. In that respect, the situation of indigenous women and girls is particularly vulnerable, given that many conflicts are in indigenous areas.

49. Conflict also destroys the education infrastructure in a country, in terms of both physical structures and human resource capacity. Schools are often targeted as symbols of State institutions or because of their affiliation with particular social groups. In a review of the impact of conflict on children's education, a recent study noted that 45 per cent of the schools and education-related infrastructure had been destroyed during the conflict. The supply of teachers and education administrators can also become scarce as a result of death in conflict, conflict-induced disease or low levels of human capital formation.

50. Schools are often ill adapted to provide the necessary assistance to help children catch up and reintegrate into safe learning environments. National education programmes must include "levelling up" programmes for children who have had absences from the education system owing to conflict and other situations beyond their control. Non-formal schooling or "catch-up" programmes should be used to reintegrate children into education systems, with careful consideration given to the particular needs of youth ex-combatants.

51. Special efforts must also be made for provision of education, school meals and take-home rations, as well as other basic services to displaced people and other communities affected by conflict. Displaced children are exposed to a number of protection risks, such as ongoing insecurity, sexual and gender-based violence and recruitment by armed groups, in school and en route to school. In host countries, refugees are rarely permitted to attend local schools, and as a result, many refugees have no other choice but to set up their own schools resulting in substandard education with unqualified teachers and poor-quality curricula. That makes it all the more difficult for them to enter or re-enter education systems if and when the opportunity arises.

52. Because post-conflict reconstruction presents opportunities for reform of education systems, intersectoral policies are needed in order to address the special needs of youth in such contexts, including quality education that emphasizes conflict resolution, relevant skills and access to decent jobs. Although education can be used as a force for peace in societies at risk of or emerging from conflict, intra-group grievances are sometimes intensified in schools by curricula, teaching methods or a general environment of intolerance, prejudice and fear. The challenge of simultaneous reform and reconstruction at a time of constrained human, financial and institutional resources and considerable urgency calls for particular attention to priorities and sequencing of interventions. As each context differs, the way Governments integrate education as part of a wider peacebuilding strategy can have wider implications. In order to mitigate the risk of conflict, a critical first step that Governments must take is to ensure that schools are child-centred, secure and unequivocally non-violent spaces. Governments should carefully identify potential grievances within education systems by analysing, in particular, the language(s) of instruction, the teaching of history and religion, curriculum development for peace and citizenship and the devolution of education governance.⁷

G. Recent innovations in information and communications technology and education

53. The positive impact of education on socio-economic development is interlinked with the teaching of innovation, knowledge creation, the development of creative capacities and the ability to absorb and use new technologies. ICT literacy is increasingly considered a central part of normal cognitive skills development, and there is a growing trend to use ICT-supported online learning in education systems. Internet access makes available to millions of users in developing countries vast digital libraries of knowledge resources, supporting both formal and informal learning. ICT can reach societies that do not have access to educational institutions, thereby promoting lifelong learning at all life-cycle stages for disadvantaged groups, including early school leavers, older people and persons with disabilities.

54. The broad sharing of educational resources and services, in particular through the use of open educational resources, holds great potential for improving the quality of under-resourced education systems and for facilitating informal learning opportunities. Open educational resources are increasingly being used by many of the world's best schools and can be accessed by students (both formal and informal) and teachers around the globe. Open educational resources can be used by educators to improve the quality of their instruction; by students to enhance their current learning activities; and by lifelong learners who wish to continue their education after formal schooling.

55. The growing popularity of online learning is challenging many assumptions about how education should be delivered. Depending on the availability of the required technological infrastructure, the trend could lead to the transformation of education systems in terms of the design of curricula and the delivery of course credits and diplomas. Even in the absence of highly advanced technological infrastructure, mobile devices, Internet kiosks, cloud computing and solar energy have made possible various forms of online learning and knowledge sharing that are user-directed and can be utilized in support of learners who are outside conventional educational frameworks.

IV. Managing the impact of current global and national trends and challenges in regard to education

56. Many of the current trends require policy responses that mitigate negative effects on education and learning in both the short- and long-term and take advantage of the positive effects.

A. Securing stable education expenditure

57. There is no substitute for national political leadership in combating children's lack of access to quality education. National commitments to public expenditure on education can catalyse development efforts, lead to greater long-term efficiency and improve equality of opportunity. Policymakers in both developing and developed countries should sustain and increase social expenditure, in particular for the most vulnerable. However, the efficiency and effectiveness of current domestic spending is as important as the level of spending. Recent studies increasingly

reveal that higher levels of spending alone do not necessarily translate into improved education outcomes. Governments should carefully analyse how education expenditure is allocated and adjust policies to prioritize areas requiring the most attention.

58. Redistributive public spending is one of the keys to expanded access and opportunities in education. It is essential for Governments to develop financing formulas that prioritize need, ensuring that the poorest regions and most marginalized groups, including girls, children with disabilities and indigenous peoples, are carefully targeted for support. In that regard, public transparency and accountability mechanisms should be introduced to ensure the effectiveness and equity of policy interventions. The involvement of communities and citizens in the design and supervision of public programmes can increase their effectiveness and reduce administrative burdens.

59. Broad-based measures are needed to strengthen the quality of the learning environment. The rapid expansion of enrolment worldwide has not yet been matched by a similar advancement in learning achievement in skills. Ensuring that exceptionally effective teachers reach children upon entry into schooling, and providing incentives for more equitable teacher deployment to underserved areas are two ways of doing it. The development of more relevant education curricula that address both local contexts and broader global changes can also help improve students' retention rates and enhance learning outcomes. Providing school feeding and nutrition programmes can further contribute to children's learning capacity once they are in school.

B. Building resilience to income shocks

60. Early investment in crisis prevention through social protection is more efficient and has better long-term results than reaction after the event. Therefore, effective social insurance and social protection programmes should be put in place and maintained to mitigate the damages caused by households' exposure to risk and increase the likelihood that children stay in school.

61. There is extensive evidence that social safety nets and cash and food transfers can prevent the withdrawal of children from school during economic shocks, adverse weather events and other crises. **Intersectoral policies are needed to address multiple barriers to entry, attendance and achievement and must be designed carefully since the reasons that keep children from enrolling and staying in school are varied and complex.**

62. Food security, nutrition and learning outcomes are closely interrelated, and those interlinkages need to be reflected in social policy formulation. Successful food and cash transfer programmes have been found to improve household food consumption and increase the use of education and health services among recipient households, and are even associated with better cognitive and language skills, fewer behavioural problems among certain age groups and improved enrolment and attendance. Such programmes address nutrition issues commonly faced by school-age children and offer an incentive for households to send their children to school, with particularly strong effects for girls' enrolment. **In-school nutrition interventions, including school feeding programmes, should be integrated into national education plans. Provision of micronutrients through fortified school**

meals, combined with other school-based health interventions, such as deworming, brings additional benefits to children's cognitive abilities and educational achievement.

63. Human development indicators remain correlated with the health and education profiles of parents in many societies. Malnourished mothers tend to deliver babies with lower birth weight and iodine deficiency, which are associated with lower educational aptitudes in children. Therefore, the education of young mothers and mothers-to-be is critical to ensuring good health and education outcomes for the next generation.

64. For farmers, in particular smallholders, high food prices can create opportunities for increased earnings through enhancing agricultural productivity and rural development, which will also benefit households in local urban areas with rapidly expanding populations. Building longer-term resilience should include a range of in- and out-of-school educational and training programmes that promote sustainable food and nutrition security while increasing agricultural productivity and expanding access to local, regional and global markets. Policies linking school feeding and nutrition programmes with agricultural production would also reap major dividends nationally.

C. Developing skills for twenty-first century challenges and opportunities

65. Technical and vocational education and training programmes can provide opportunities for young people and adults to increase skills and learning. They play an important role in strengthening the transition from school to work and by offering second chances to school leavers and combating social exclusion. Governments should move from a top-down, supply-driven model of technical and vocational education and training provision towards a demand-driven approach that responds to the needs of individuals, companies and the economy. Such programmes should be designed to develop broad skills with an emphasis on problem-solving, "learning to learn" and entrepreneurship in order to link basic education systems more effectively to twenty-first century sectors, such as jobs in the "green" and knowledge economies.

66. Education for disaster risk reduction and preparedness needs to be reinforced in order for communities to anticipate and address the impact of natural disasters in an agile and comprehensive manner, especially in areas that are already experiencing multiple deprivations. In order to make the greatest impact within communities, education for disaster risk reduction and preparedness should be promoted through both formal curricula and informal education.

67. Developing educational strategies for climate change adaptation and mitigation can promote a better understanding of local environments, change consumption and production patterns and help anticipate future ecological threats. Teaching sustainable resource management and energy-saving and resource-conserving behaviours not only promotes sustainable lifestyles but can also lead to cost savings. Education for sustainable development with a particular focus on climate change adaptation and mitigation should be expanded to produce immediate tangible benefits.

68. Access to low-cost ICT should be recognized as providing a catalytic and contributing role in attaining education goals. In contexts where financial resources are limited, the creation of community technology centres in schools, which serve students and the broader community, is an efficient way of making access more readily available, especially in rural areas. In addition, any policy introducing ICT into education curricula must address the needs of teachers, with the relevant training made easily accessible to them.

69. Governments should develop national ICT and broadband strategies in order to close the widening access gap to broadband between regions. A number of different models have been implemented through public-private partnerships utilizing public subsidies or providing financial incentives to private operators to expand access to underserved areas.

D. Promoting migration for education

70. Countries facing human resource shortages in key social sectors, such as education, require appropriate intersectoral strategies for educating and retaining key professionals at home. In order to offset the effects of skilled emigration, enhanced cooperation between countries that share migrant flows is necessary. Policy options that support managed migration systems, for example, a coordinated regional migration policy that allows for greater levels of circular migration, help alleviate shortages and recoup returns to national investment in human resource development. Countries should also expand opportunities for research, innovation, entrepreneurship and decent working conditions at home, which might stimulate a return flow of migrants and capital.

71. Governments in origin and destination countries can facilitate remittance flows and enhance their impact through the coordination of appropriate policies. Countries can increase banking access to migrants and their families by reducing the transaction costs associated with sending remittances through banking channels. Encouraging remittances through formal banking channels or special matching programmes that provide incentives for investing in local infrastructure can also improve their potential development impact. In rural and remote areas, access to those services could be improved by encouraging the participation of microfinance institutions, credit unions and savings banks in the remittance market.

72. Both internal and international migrants should have equal access to the full range of public services and benefits, especially education, health and social assistance, regardless of their residence status. In particular, Government policies should seek to facilitate, not hinder, the process of internal migration. At the same time, the universal provision of education and other services should also be secured in places experiencing large number of net outmigration.

E. Revitalizing the global commitment to education

73. Low-income countries still receive less than half of all aid to basic education. Accelerated progress towards the Education for All goals requires donors to honour the overall aid commitments made in 2005 and to strengthen their commitment to basic education. Donor cooperation could be strengthened using

a pooled funding mechanism, such as a Global Fund for Education, which could achieve more and at a quicker pace than when donors act alone. International health funds provide an example of the gains that can be generated by sharing financing resources and working through a multilateral fund with a single set of requirements for funding requests, disbursement and reporting.

74. Just as in national education sectors, the quantity of donor resources cannot substitute for the quality of aid delivery. If recipients cannot rely on donor commitments, they cannot develop and implement medium-term financing plans for achieving education goals. Predictability is particularly weak in conflict-affected countries. Donors and recipients need to intensify their efforts to make aid more effective. Predictability is critical to aid effectiveness; unexpected shortfalls can have highly damaging effects on education, disrupting infrastructure expansion plans and limiting the resources available to hire and train teachers.

75. Education comprises a large share of programme-based aid, and in some countries, donors are pooling funding for education, working through national systems and sharing reporting structures. In other cases, donors have cooperated in supporting reforms in planning, reporting and auditing to facilitate pooled financing arrangements and increase aid in support of the national education strategy. Better alignment of aid to Government programmes and coordination of activities among donors are crucial to ensuring the effectiveness of aid for education. In particular, non-Development Assistance Committee donors and private philanthropic financing should be actively included in planning for improved aid harmonization.

F. Peacebuilding through education

76. While the delivery of education services has been increasingly integrated into humanitarian response systems, the intensity of environmental crises, long-term conflicts and ongoing threats to humanitarian space pose persistent challenges to delivering quality education in the aforementioned settings. In emergency situations, a lack of coordination between the Government, community and myriad non-governmental organizations often obstructs access to and the continuation of quality education. There is an urgent need to recognize the vital role of education during conflict-related emergencies. Current systems for assessing the education needs of conflict-affected communities should be strengthened. In conflict-affected countries, education systems and curricula must be designed with reconciliation and resolution as their focus in order to mainstream social cohesion into children's learning. To unlock education's potential to nurture peace, Governments and donors should prioritize the development of inclusive education systems, with policies on language, curriculum and decentralization informed by an assessment of their potential impact on long-standing grievances.

77. Furthermore, efforts should be made to build an evidence base for the effectiveness of using education to address social, economic and environmental concerns, which can help improve access to funding streams in addition to improving education policy and curriculum development.

78. Bypassing conflict-affected States is a lost opportunity for conflict resolution and reconstruction efforts and raises the risk of a relapse into conflict. Donors need

to break down the artificial divide between humanitarian and long-term aid. Flexibility and innovation in aid requirements are needed for the international community when working in such States. For example, multi-donor trust funds have demonstrated that aid can be increased even in the most difficult circumstances.

79. Schools should be seen first and foremost as places for imparting the most vital skills: tolerance, mutual respect and the ability to live peacefully with others. States should ensure that policies recognize the right to education in emergencies and should develop preparedness plans for education in such situations, with particular attention paid to traditionally marginalized groups such as girls, children with disabilities and indigenous persons. Governance arrangements for refugees should be reformed to improve access to education. Governments should also strengthen the education entitlements of internally displaced people. Furthermore, Governments should strengthen the systems that monitor and report on human rights abuses affecting education, support national strategies aimed at stopping those violations and impose targeted sanctions on egregious and repeat offenders.

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**High-level segment: annual ministerial review: implementing
the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard
to education****Theme of the annual ministerial review: implementing
the internationally agreed goals and commitments in
regard to education****Report of the Secretary-General***Summary*

Education is not only a fundamental human right, but also a catalyst for the achievement of many other development goals. The present report emphasizes the interlinked nature of all development goals. It provides a brief overview of progress towards the internationally agreed development goals related to education, identifying challenges and possible policy responses and proposing a number of recommendations. In addition to primary education, it considers preschool education, youth and adult literacy and skills development, and gender equality. It examines the quality of education and the relevance of learning gaps across and within countries, as well as teacher shortages and deployment. It highlights measures that have proved effective in overcoming inequality in access and participation in education, and in ensuring a more equitable distribution of higher levels of learning outcomes. It argues that improvements in both quality and equity can be made at low cost, while also making the case for strengthening levels of domestic and international investments, increasing efficiency in their use and improving the targeting of allocations at the most disadvantaged.

The present report should be read in conjunction with the report of the Secretary-General on current global and national trends and challenges and their impact on education.

* E/2011/100.



Contents

Economic and Social Council



	Page
I. Introduction	3
II. Trends in achieving international Education for All goals	4
III. Quality of education: improving learning outcomes	12
IV. Overcoming barriers to universal basic education for all	14
V. Mobilizing resources for education	18
VI. The way forward and recommendations	21

Theme of the annual ministerial review: Implementing
the internationally agreed goals and commitments in
regard to education

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Education is not only a fundamental human right, but also a catalyst for the achievement of many other development goals. The present report synthesizes the findings of the annual ministerial review, which provides a high-level overview of progress towards the internationally agreed development goals related to education. It identifies challenges and provides policy responses and proposes a number of recommendations to achieve the education goals. It also provides a number of key findings and policy recommendations. It examines the quality of education and the relevance of learning outcomes and the role of teachers, as well as teacher training and deployment. It highlights the importance of effective learning environments, the role of parents and communities in education, the need for a more equitable distribution of resources, and the need to ensure that education is relevant to the needs of the 21st century. It also examines the role of education in promoting sustainable development, and the need to ensure that education is accessible to all, including the most vulnerable.

The present report should be read in conjunction with the report of the Secretary-General on the world situation and development, and the report of the Secretary-General on the world situation and development, and the report of the Secretary-General on the world situation and development.

I. Introduction

1. Education for all is a fundamental human right. The right to basic education is built into most national legislation, with some 90 per cent of countries around the world having legally binding regulations requiring children to attend school. Moreover, the right to basic education is an enabling right in that it is a condition for the realization of other economic, social and cultural rights, as well as a catalyst for social change.

2. The positive impacts of education on poverty reduction and overall human development are well documented. They include increased rural productivity and urban self-employment, higher levels of income, lowered fertility, a better diet and earlier and more effective diagnosis of illness, better child health care (in particular through higher levels of female education) and longer life expectancy. The central role of education in the achievement of all Millennium Development Goals is clearly reaffirmed in the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals (Assembly resolution 65/1).

3. The key interlinkages among education, health, poverty reduction and gender equality are well documented. Primary education (Millennium Development Goal 2), for example, has positive effects in terms of health (Goals 4, 5 and 6), poverty reduction and the elimination of hunger (Goal 1), as well as gender equality (Goal 3). In turn, improvements in health, poverty and hunger reduction and gender equality have positive effects on education (see table 1).

Table 1
Positive, reinforcing links between education, health, gender, and poverty and hunger reduction

	<i>Effect on education</i>	<i>Effect on health</i>	<i>Effect on poverty and hunger reduction</i>	<i>Effect on gender equality</i>
Improvement in education	—	Encourages good health practices, delays marriage, reduces fertility and child mortality, improves maternal health; promotes HIV prevention; primary education provides access to secondary and post-secondary education and skilled health workers	Improves agricultural productivity and off-farm employment opportunities; primary education provides access to secondary and post-secondary education and generates skilled workforces	Improves learning and progression for all children
Improvement in health	Increases initial enrolment, daily attendance, progression and learning achievement	—	Increases fitness and productivity and reduces the cost of health care	Improves well-being for women and girls, enabling them to participate fully in society (politically, economically, socially and culturally)

	<i>Effect on education</i>	<i>Effect on health</i>	<i>Effect on poverty and hunger reduction</i>	<i>Effect on gender equality</i>
Improvement in poverty and hunger reduction	Increases initial enrolment, daily attendance, progression and learning achievement	Improves nutrition and creates resources to pay for health care	—	Improves women's health and status, and therefore their capacity to contribute to the establishment of gender-equitable social relations politically, economically, socially and culturally
Improvement in gender equality	Improves relationships developed in schools between girls and boys; effectively teaches social values and creates a safer environment for all children	Improves treatment given to women and men; protects women against health risks associated with gender-based violence; improves care for mothers and newborn children and nutrition of families	Improves nutrition and work opportunities for women and men; ensures that the care economy is adequately supported	—

Source: *The Lancet*, vol. 376, No. 9745 (2010).

4. Higher levels of education outcomes are both a condition for and a result of progress in the achievement of Millennium Development Goals 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6. While it has traditionally been agreed that economic rates of return on the investments of individuals and society in education are highest at the primary level, it can be argued that Goal 2 is an important catalyst for the achievement of other development goals, precisely because it provides access to post-primary levels of education and training that have significant impacts on other dimensions of development.

5. In accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, it is thus essential to increase the impact of education in achieving a wider range of development goals, by continuing to pursue the broader Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All, adopted in 2000.

II. Trends in achieving international Education for All goals

6. The two education-related Millennium Development Goal targets — 2.A, relative to primary education, and 3.A, relative to gender parity in education — overlap with two of the goals contained within the broader Framework for Action on Education for All. This section provides a brief overview of trends in reaching these Education for All goals.¹

¹ A more detailed analysis of these trends is contained in the most recent Education for All Global Monitoring Reports of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Early childhood care and education

Education for All goal 1

Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children

Child mortality

7. The cognitive, social and linguistic skills that children acquire in early childhood constitute the foundations for lifelong learning and shape their educational opportunities. The development of such skills is determined by nutrition, health, living conditions and household poverty. An overview of the evolution of child mortality rates — a key indicator of early-childhood care — indicates that, while progress is being made in all regions of the world, extreme disparities exist, with sub-Saharan Africa recording the highest rates, higher than those observed in South and West Asia and approximately three times higher than those observed in the Arab States and Central Asia (see table 2).

Pre-primary education

8. Investment in preschool education is a cost-effective way to overcome possible learning handicaps of early childhood and to enhance learning in primary school, in particular for children from more disadvantaged communities. While there has been a global increase in participation rates in pre-primary education, with enrolment growing in all regions of the world, in particular sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia, the expansion has been uneven. The most recent data indicate that gross enrolment ratios in pre-primary enrolment vary, ranging from 80 per cent in North America and Western Europe to more than 70 per cent in Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, to between 40 and 50 per cent across Asia, and to less than 20 per cent in the Arab States and sub-Saharan Africa. Likewise, as is often the case at other levels of education, there are significant disparities within countries, with the lowest enrolment ratios observed among the most disadvantaged children. Public investment should be geared towards narrowing disparities by targeting marginalized groups, which tend to reap particularly high benefits from preschool learning.

Table 2
Key indicators for the goal of early childhood care and education

Region	Under-5 mortality rate		Gross enrolment ratio: pre-primary education	
	2005-2010 (per 1,000)	Change since 2000-2005 (percentage)	2008 (percentage)	Change since 1999 (percentage)
World	71	-8	44	34
Low-income countries	122	-8	18	29
Lower-middle-income countries	70	-9	42	32
Upper-middle-income countries	27	-16	66	31
High-income countries	7	-07	77	7

Region	Under-5 mortality rate		Gross enrolment ratio: pre-primary education	
	2003-2010 (per 1,000)	Change since 2000-2005 (percentage)	2009 (percentage)	Change since 1999 (percentage)
Arab States	50	-13	19	27
Central Asia	52	-9	29	42
East Asia and the Pacific	31	-11	48	27
South and West Asia	82	-10	42	96
Latin America and the Caribbean	28	-14	68	23
North America and Western Europe	6	-6	80	6
Central and Eastern Europe	19	-17	66	34
Sub-Saharan Africa	149	-8	17	43

Source: UNESCO (2011).

9. The levels of education attained by women, in particular in the context of secondary education, have a positive impact on their demand for education for their children. A mother's level of education has a strong positive effect on the enrolment and the levels of education attained by her children, especially if they are girls. For non-literate female adults and out-of-school young people who have missed out on opportunities to gain access to schooling or who have dropped out before having completed the full cycle of primary education, a non-formal education programme can make a major contribution to encouraging the enrolment of their children in preschool education and enhancing the learning outcomes and life chances of those children.

Universal primary education

Education for All goal 2

Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality

Millennium Development Goal target 2.A

Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling

Enrolment

10. The period since 2000 began with rapid progress towards universal primary education. It has been a period during which some of the poorest countries have dramatically increased enrolment, narrowed gender gaps and extended opportunities to disadvantaged groups, with the most rapid rates of increase observed in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and the Arab States² (see table 3). The *Millennium*

² Significant increases in the primary net enrolment ratio have been observed in such countries as Benin, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Guinea, the United Republic of Tanzania, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Madagascar, Niger and Yemen.

Development Goals Report 2010 concluded that, despite the tremendous strides made by many poorer countries, the current pace of progress was insufficient to ensure that by 2015 all girls and boys would complete a full course of primary education.

Completion

11. Beyond access and attendance, it is important to ensure that children complete the full cycle of primary education, which is a necessary, albeit sometimes insufficient, condition for the acquisition of sustainable literacy skills.³ Indeed, despite the global progress in enrolment observed since 2000, millions of children continue to leave school without having completed the full course of the primary education cycle, and are not acquiring basic literacy, numeracy or essential learning tools. School dropout rates remain high. Reasons for dropping out of school include the increased direct and indirect costs of schooling — in particular in the context of the economic and food price crises — as well as the poor quality of education and the fact that it is not considered of great relevance by many individuals, households and communities. Supply factors such as the quality of schooling, the lack of schools and/or distance from school also contribute to school drop-out rates, particularly among girls and adolescents, whose school attendance is further challenged by gender-related health and safety issues.

Table 3
Key indicators for the goal of universal primary education

Region	Primary adjusted net enrolment ratio ^a		Survival rate to last grade of primary	Out-of-school children	
	2008 (percentage)	Change since 1999 (percentage)	2007 (percentage)	2008 (thousands)	Change since 1999 (percentage)
World	90	7	93	67 483	-36
Low-income countries	82	28	67	24 838	-42
Lower-middle-income countries	90	6	88	35 846	-36
Upper-middle-income countries	95	1	94	3 740	-15
High-income countries	96	-0.3	98	3 065	3
Arab States	86	11	97	6 188	-34
Central Asia	94	-1	99	322	-11
East Asia and the Pacific	95	1	—	7 869	-27
South and West Asia	90	14	66	17 919	-51
Latin America and the Caribbean	95	1	86	2 946	-21
North America and Western Europe	96	-2	99	2 224	55
Central and Eastern Europe	94	1	97	1 148	-32
Sub-Saharan Africa	77	31	70	28 867	-32

Source: UNESCO (2011).

^a The primary adjusted net enrolment ratio measures the proportion of children of primary-school age who are enrolled in primary or secondary school.

³ Completion rates measure the proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach the last grade of primary.

Out-of-school children and adolescents

12. Incomplete access to primary education, and dropping out of school at an early age, continue to deny many children the right to basic education. Worldwide progress made in primary enrolment since 2000, however, has reduced the absolute overall number of out-of-school children from an estimated 106 million in 1999 to some 67 million in 2008. Despite that overall progress, the absolute numbers of out-of-school children have actually increased since 1999 in certain regions such as the Caribbean, North America, Western Europe and the Pacific. Overall, the number of out-of-school children worldwide remains high, with close to half of all these children still concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa (32 million) and a quarter in South and West Asia (18 million). In addition, it is estimated that more than a third of out-of-school children live in low-income countries affected by conflict, such as Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Sudan. An estimated 40 million of these children have a disability. Furthermore, girls remain disproportionately represented among those out of school, as do child labourers and children living in slums and rural areas. Marginalized as a result of a combination of factors, these children are the most difficult to reach. Girls also constitute the majority of out-of-school adolescents, in particular in the Arab States, South and West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

13. High drop-out levels and incomplete primary education are also indications of the inefficient utilization of public and private resources. If retention is to be improved, it is crucial to gain a better understanding of patterns and causes of dropping out, including through the analysis of household-survey data, in order to better design a broad set of policies and strategies to tackle the underlying vulnerabilities.

Youth and adult literacy and skills**Education for All goal 3**

Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes

Education for All goal 4

Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults

14. Universal completion of primary education of good quality is thus intimately linked to progress towards Education for All goal 3, on learning and life skills for young people and adults, and goal 4, which aims to improve levels of adult literacy by 2015. The rate of adult literacy increased from 68 per cent to 80 per cent worldwide between the 1985-1994 and 2000-2007 periods, with most rapid progress seen in South and West Asia and the Arab States. However, disparities persist across regions and countries.

Table 4
Youth (15-24) literacy rates
(Percentage)

Region	1985-1994			2005-2008		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Arab States	74	83	65	87	91	84
Central and Eastern Europe	98	99	98	99	99	98
Central Asia	100	100	100	100	100	100
East Asia and the Pacific	95	97	93	98	98	98
East Asia	95	97	93	98	99	98
Pacific	92	93	90	91	91	92
Latin America and the Caribbean	92	92	92	97	97	97
Caribbean	74	77	72	80	80	80
Latin America	92	92	93	98	97	98
North America and Western Europe	100	99	100	100	100	100
South and West Asia	60	72	48	79	86	73
Sub-Saharan Africa	65	72	58	71	76	66
World	83	88	79	89	92	86

Source: UNESCO, Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2011, based on UNESCO Institute for Statistics database.

Note: Data for the periods 1985-1994 and 2005-2008 are the most recent available for the period specified.

15. The level of educational attainment of young adults is a strategic consideration for any discussion on development. An overview of trends over the past two decades clearly shows significant progress in reducing the share of young people who are non-literate, in particular in South and West Asia, as well as in the Arab States, the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa (see table 4). Moreover, significant progress can be observed in narrowing the gender gap in youth literacy rates in South and West Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States.⁴ Despite that progress, the most recent regional data available point to persistent disparities in some regions, with more than one quarter and one fifth of young people, in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia, respectively, still deprived of basic literacy skills. Significant gender gaps with disadvantaged girls continue to be observed in those regions.

16. Compared with the attention given to primary education, literacy and skills development achieved through technical and vocational education and training have been relatively neglected in most countries. Yet, the broader notion of "basic learning needs" refers specifically to the learning required in order to be able to live and work in dignity. For employers, attention to skills development through technical and vocational education and training is often seen as essential for economic competitiveness. Governments and donor agencies tend to combine economic and social priorities, seeing technical and vocational education and training as contributing to economic development and as a means of addressing poverty and marginalization and supporting social cohesion.

⁴ One important exception to this pattern is the Caribbean region, where the traditional gender gap is widening, to the disadvantage of young men.

Gender equality in education

Education for All goal 5

Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality

Millennium Development Goal Target 3.A

Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015

Gender parity in primary education

17. Significant progress has been made in reducing gender disparities in education. Gender parity in primary education has already been achieved in many regions: Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and Western Europe.

18. Developing countries as a whole are also approaching gender parity in primary education (see table 5), in particular in South and West Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States.

19. Despite those positive strides, girls still constitute the majority of out-of-school children.

Table 5
Gender parity in primary, secondary and tertiary education

Region	Primary education				Secondary education		Tertiary education	
	Net enrolment ratio		Out-of-school children		Gross enrolment ratio		Gross enrolment ratio	
	Gender parity index (female/male)		Percentage female		Gender parity index (female/male)		Gender parity index (female/male)	
	1999	2008	1999	2008	1999	2008	1999	2007
Arab States	0.90	0.94	58	58	0.88	0.92	0.74	1.05
Central and Eastern Europe	0.97	0.99	57	50	0.97	0.96	1.18	1.25
Central Asia	0.99	0.98	52	55	0.99	0.98	0.93	1.10
East Asia and the Pacific	1.00	1.02	47	39	0.94	1.04	0.75	1.00
East Asia	1.00	1.02	47	38	0.94	1.04	0.73	0.99
Pacific	0.98	0.97	54	52	1.00	0.96	1.24	1.31
Latin America and the Caribbean	1.00	0.99	46	51	1.07	1.08	1.12	1.19
Caribbean	1.00	1.03	49	48	1.01	1.00	1.30	1.36
Latin America	1.00	0.99	45	52	1.07	1.08	1.12	1.19
North America and Western Europe	1.00	1.01	49	45	1.02	1.00	1.23	1.33
South and West Asia	0.84	0.95	65	59	0.75	0.87	0.64	0.77
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.88	0.95	54	54	0.82	0.79	0.67	0.66
World	0.94	0.98	57	53	0.91	0.96	0.96	1.08

Source: UNESCO, Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2011, based on UNESCO Institute for Statistics database.

Gender parity in secondary and tertiary education

20. Gender parity in secondary education has been achieved in a number of regions, including Central Asia, East Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and Western Europe. In others — South and West Asia and, to a lesser degree, the Arab States — the gender gap has narrowed.

21. Some regions, however, have experienced reversals; notably sub-Saharan Africa and the Pacific. Overall, the gender gap in secondary enrolment is most evident in the three regions (sub-Saharan Africa, Western Asia and South Asia) in which average enrolment is also lowest.

22. With respect to tertiary education, progress has been solid (except in sub-Saharan Africa) and, in some regions, superb. The Arab States, East Asia and the Pacific and South and West Asia have all made significant strides over the past decade. In certain regions (Central and Eastern Europe, the Caribbean, North America, the Pacific and Western Europe), female enrolment in higher education now far outnumbers that of males, a trend that may eventually raise its own set of concerns.

Patterns and scale of inequality and marginalization in education

23. Measuring marginalization in education is often difficult, because it is complicated by a scarcity of national data identifying the most disadvantaged groups. Alarming, many Governments have shown little interest in improving such data.

24. Nevertheless, a study of 80 countries conducted in 2010 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) concluded that absolute deprivation in education remained at extraordinarily high levels, despite general progress made in the area of education over the past decade.

25. Further complicating the picture is the fact that national averages often mask more extreme inequalities, linked to poverty, language and gender.

26. When poverty is combined with linguistic and gender differences, the typical result is a powerful cocktail of social exclusion and educational marginalization. Where major gender disparities in education persist, they tend to be aggravated by the traditionally weak position of women and girls in such societies, with sexual harassment and gender-based violence widely tolerated.

27. Conflict-affected countries, which are home to roughly 40 per cent of the world's out-of-school children, are another major locus of education exclusion, as are frequently stigmatized diseases like HIV/AIDS.

28. Thus, major strides made in access to education in certain areas should not invite complacency on other fronts. Governments will have to do far more to extend opportunities to hard-to-reach groups, such as ethnic minorities, poor households in slums and remote rural areas, those affected by armed conflict, and children with disabilities. Success will require carefully designed strategies based on a strong awareness of local patterns of marginalization.

III. Quality of education: improving learning outcomes

Education for All goal 6

Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills

29. Until recently, much of the focus in educational development has been on increasing the number of children and young people who have access to basic education, with much less attention paid to the outcomes of the educational process. The completion of a full cycle of primary education of poor quality does not ensure the acquisition of literacy skills. For example, an analysis of 21 countries in sub-Saharan Africa shows that 22- to 24-year-olds with five years of education had a 40 per cent chance of being illiterate. As a result, patterns of dropping out of primary school and the often low quality of learning in primary schools contribute to illiteracy among young adults.

Gaps in learning achievement across and within countries

30. Beyond disparities in access to and participation in education, significant disparities in the distribution of learning achievement exist among countries. There are also significant inequalities in learning achievement within countries, in particular low-income countries, where they tend to be much wider.

31. While levels of learning achievement may rise with increases in average income levels, the links are far from automatic. A recent study of school improvements in 20 countries confirmed that systems with similar levels of spending on education have widely ranging levels of performance; an increase in expenditure does not always translate into higher or more equitable levels of learning outcomes. Improvements in the quality of education can often be achieved not by increasing levels of funding, but by placing greater emphasis on efficiency and quality.

Enhancing the relevance of learning

32. Enhancing the relevance of learning content is fundamental to improving the effectiveness of education. Improving the quality of education, in particular at the secondary level, hinges largely on making the teaching and learning process more relevant to the world of work. This entails incorporating work experience into the curriculum and examination requirements, and promoting collaboration between schools and vocational and technical training institutions that provide real, on-site training in vocational skills. Examples from a Save the Children project in Colombia include agricultural training on school farms and the development of tourist packages, with students being trained as guides. While better linkages between academic and professional learning are essential for employment, income generation and poverty reduction, enhancing the relevance of learning cannot be reduced to its economic dimension alone. Education, including technical and vocational education and training, has much to contribute to holistic human development outcomes. In today's globalized world, sustainable development also requires specific knowledge, skills and values with which to address a wide range of contemporary challenges

relative to the environment (sustainable management of natural resources, climate change, risk of natural disasters), as well as to social, civic and political socialization in an increasingly interdependent and changing world (respect for life, human dignity, cultural diversity and human rights principles). Such components of global citizenship are essential for enhancing the relevance of education and its catalytic role in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

The teaching and learning process

33. Greater attention needs to be paid to the teaching-learning process through the adoption of student-centred approaches, the design of more relevant curricula that provide life skills and facilitate the transition into the labour market, and the provision of relevant and affordable books and materials. Providing education in the local language for the first years of schooling and addressing such issues as predisposition, temperament, peer pressure and socialization are recommended approaches. Implementing learner-centred approaches remains a challenge in many contexts, since overcrowded classrooms, lack of adequate initial teacher training and lack of professional development opportunities seriously erode the capacity of teachers.

34. Based on comprehensive, multifaceted and locally adapted models, the child-friendly school policy of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has demonstrated that schools can achieve child-centred, safe and healthful learning environments. Information and communications technology, in the context of, inter alia, open educational resources and distance-learning opportunities, offers a number of promising developments for enhancing the quality of and increasing access to education. Moreover, quality teaching and learning programmes need not be expensive, in particular when they are tailored to a specific context and purpose. Not only can affordable and locally available resources be used to create teaching and learning materials; local experts can also be effectively used to teach and share their rich knowledge and experience.

The teacher gap

35. Teachers are the single most important resource for sustaining progress towards an improved quality of learning. One of the main challenges in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All goals, in particular with respect to marginalized groups, is the acute shortage of qualified teachers. In order to accelerate progress towards universal primary education, countries will have to make significant efforts to recruit and train teachers. Many countries are facing severe teacher shortages. Furthermore, countries that have achieved universal primary education continue to face challenges in recruiting, training and retaining sufficient numbers of qualified primary teachers. In 2008, nearly 100 countries, including both developing and developed nations, faced teacher shortages to some degree in their efforts to provide quality education to all primary-school-aged children by the target year of 2015. At least 1.9 million additional new teachers might be needed in order to achieve Millennium Development Goal 2 by 2015. Given the attrition of an estimated 7.2 million teachers between 2008 and 2015,⁵ a total of 9.1 million teachers would need to be recruited worldwide to ensure the

⁵ Teacher attrition is due to retirement, change in profession or teaching level, or the assumption of non-teaching educational responsibilities.

achievement of Goal 2 by 2015. It is estimated that the number of new teachers needed in sub-Saharan Africa alone equals the current teaching force in the region. In addition, it is estimated that HIV and AIDS account for up to 77 per cent of the teacher shortages in countries with high HIV rates.

Inequitable patterns of teacher deployment

36. The shortage of qualified teachers is also related to patterns of deployment. High pupil-teacher ratios tend to be concentrated in rural areas, as well as in areas marked by poverty and marginalization. Moreover, these inequitable patterns of teacher deployment are exacerbated by the limited number of qualified teachers. Low teacher morale further aggravates the problem, and low pay hinders the recruitment of promising candidates, forcing many teachers to supplement their salaries through other activities. While teacher absenteeism may be due to low remuneration, it is also related to a lack of other incentives and professional development opportunities, especially in rural areas. The financial challenge of expanding the teaching force and ensuring its training and professional development has led some countries to resort to hiring teachers at lower levels of remuneration and to provide them with fewer benefits, possibly compromising the quality of the teaching and learning processes.

IV. Overcoming barriers to universal basic education for all

37. When education goals are aligned with the right to education, measures to make education more affordable and accessible, social protection programmes more comprehensive and learning environments more inclusive all contribute to progress in terms of access to, equity in and quality of education.

Making education more affordable for poorer households

38. In fulfilling their legal obligation to provide free primary education for all, a number of States have reduced or eliminated the direct costs of primary schooling through the partial or total abolition of school fees. The school fee abolition initiative, initially launched by UNICEF and the World Bank, was designed to support policies to ensure access to quality basic education by removing or reducing cost barriers for parents and households. The initiative has accelerated progress towards universal completion of primary education through the elimination of school fees or the provision of targeted fee exemptions, subsidies and incentives for the poor, resulting in dramatic surges in enrolment in such countries as Burundi, Kenya, Timor-Leste and Uganda. In particular, a tremendous increase in enrolment has been observed among poor, previously excluded and vulnerable children (girls, children living in remote rural areas, child labourers, children with disabilities and children affected by HIV/AIDS and social conflict), whose households are most affected by school fees. School-fee abolition has a direct impact on equity and inclusion, as it addresses the rights and specific needs of marginalized, excluded and vulnerable children.

39. The total abolition of school fees is only a partial response to the poverty constraints affecting household demand for education. It is important to consider complementary measures to address the indirect opportunity costs of schooling. Such measures may involve cutting the costs of uniforms, textbooks and other

materials, as well as offering conditional cash transfers and stipends at the secondary level. For example, Nepal has scaled up its stipend programme, Viet Nam has introduced a variety of financial support mechanisms to help ethnic minority students, and Mozambique has targeted orphans and other vulnerable children with vouchers for the purchase of clothing and stationery. In addition, Turkey introduced conditional cash transfers in 2002, targeting regular school attendance in primary and secondary schools among children from poor households, while Armenia, through its food-for-education programme, has increased incentives for participation and more regular attendance through the provision of school meals.

Making schools more accessible for children and adolescents

40. Physical access to schools and classrooms remains an important barrier to the achievement of the goals of Education for All, in particular in relation to girls in rural areas, isolated communities in more remote areas and migrant populations. There are many successful examples of measures to reduce distances to school or to adapt schooling to the specific living conditions in local communities.

Box 1

Reaching the marginalized in Bangladesh through floating schools

Bangladesh has made rapid but uneven progress towards universal primary education. Once-deep gender inequalities have been eliminated in primary education, and rural areas have been catching up with urban areas in this regard. Enrolment among children living in extreme poverty has been less impressive, however, and the marginalization of this group remains a barrier to universal primary education. Initiatives developed by non-governmental organizations, reaching more than 1 million of the country's most marginalized children, provide powerful evidence that this barrier can be removed.

Another example comes from the country's riverbanks. The 800,000-strong bade, or river gypsy, community lives on boats in groups of 10 to 15 families. The bades, who are among the poorest people in the country, travel long distances, are not permanently settled and have traditionally lacked the residency rights necessary to claim places in school. Their mobility makes it difficult for children to attend school regularly, so teachers are reluctant to enrol them or to provide them with books.

Since 2006, a national non-governmental organization, the Grambangla Unnayan Committee, has provided education through 21 "school boats" that follow the bade community. Teachers are recruited from the community and are given basic training. The boats provide education for two to three years, after which children living with sedentary relatives can gain admission to Government primary schools.

41. In Bangladesh, non-governmental organizations have launched initiatives to make education more accessible for children who continue to miss out on educational opportunities because of extreme poverty and/or the mobility that

characterizes the lifestyles of their communities (see box 1). The student family lodging programme launched by the People's Foundation of Bolivia has made education more accessible for young people from extremely poor families living in isolated small communities in the Andean highlands. Funded by municipal districts, educational centres in strategically located villages, together with an accommodation network of host families, enable young people in neighbouring communities to attend school on a regular basis and to take part in preventive health seminars during the week, returning to their families and communities at the end of the week. School accessibility is also enhanced by the provision of low-cost ramps, appropriate toilet facilities and transport for children with disabilities, barriers that can be overcome through policy interventions and regulations relating to school design.

Providing second-chance programmes for out-of-school children and young people

42. Accelerated learning programmes are another option for addressing the education needs of children and young people who have never enrolled in school or have dropped out before completing the full primary cycle, or whose education has been disrupted by displacement as a result of a conflict or natural disaster. In the disadvantaged regions of northern Ghana, for example, second-chance accelerated literacy programmes conducted by non-governmental organizations have provided out-of-school children with effective basic skills and, in many instances, the opportunity to re-enter a formal school curriculum (see box 2).

Box 2

Addressing educational deprivation in northern Ghana

Northern Ghana faces some of the country's most acute educational deprivation. School attendance rates there are among the lowest in the country, and many children reach adulthood with no more than a few years of schooling. Parents cite distance to school, cost, seasonal labour demand and (for girls) early marriage as major barriers.

An innovative programme run by non-governmental organizations is aimed at providing out-of-school children in northern Ghana with a second chance. School for Life offers an intensive nine-month literacy course for children aged 8 to 14, with the objective of preparing them to re-enter primary school. Teaching schedules are designed to accommodate seasonal demands on children's time. Students are given free books and uniforms are not required, reducing the cost of attendance.

The School for Life curriculum is designed to make education meaningful for rural families who believe that formal schools fail to respect the dignity and strengthen the self-esteem of their children. Students are taught in local languages by locally recruited facilitators — many of them volunteers — who receive in-service training.

School for Life has achieved impressive results. Between 1996 and 2007, it reached some 85,000 children in eight districts, with no discernible gender gap. An evaluation in 2007 found that more than 90 per cent of participating students had completed the course and that 81 per cent of course graduates met third-grade literacy and numeracy standards and 65 per cent had entered the formal education system. Government data indicate that School for Life graduates entering formal school perform above average in mathematics and English.

43. In conflict-affected countries, where there is a high concentration of out-of-school children and young people, accelerated learning enables older students to complete their basic education cycle in a timely manner, providing them with basic literacy and life skills. Examples of such programmes include those being provided by the Ministry of Education of the Sudan to help students in Darfur to catch up with their schooling and the Complementary Rapid Education for Primary School Programme for adolescents affected by the conflict in Sierra Leone, being provided by the Ministry of Education of Sierra Leone and UNICEF (see box 3).

Box 3

Complementary Rapid Education for Primary School Programme in Sierra Leone

In the wake of 11 years of civil war, a high number of the adolescents of Sierra Leone lag behind, as they were either affected by or involved in the war, deprived of access to basic education opportunities. It is estimated that more than 400,000 children aged 10 to 15 have missed part of their schooling or have never been to school. The current youth unemployment rate stands at 70 per cent.

One impressive programme aimed at reversing this situation is the Ibis Complementary Rapid Education for Primary School Programme, developed by UNICEF and the Sierra Leone Ministry of Education. The programme offers six years' worth of primary school education in three years to children and adolescents who missed education as a result of the war. More than 3,000 young people have benefited from the Programme, which also works rigorously to enhance accountability in the delivery of education and the professional development of teachers and education stakeholders at both the central and district levels. The Programme trains teachers while putting them to work in classrooms.

44. Skills development through technical and vocational education and training for the world of work can play an important role in the rehabilitation and socio-economic integration of former combatants.

Overcoming resource constraints for teachers

45. Although the shortage of financial resources is a key constraint on efforts to improve the training and the working conditions of teachers in both developed and developing countries, it is not insurmountable. Effective strategies exist for mitigating the potential adverse impact of limited resources on the training and working conditions of teachers. Foremost among these is the improved better management of available resources. Arguably, the poor management of resources is a more critical constraint. A focus on non-financial incentives such as providing adequate professional support for teachers, promoting innovative approaches, new skills and motivation, easing bureaucratic burdens and instituting accountability measures can improve teacher training and working conditions, even in resource-poor contexts.

46. Moreover, when it is decentralized, teacher professional support can be made more affordable, more sustainable and more contextually responsive, in particular in remote areas. Effective experiences include building the capacity of decentralized education authorities to deliver professional support to teachers and developing teacher support networks that are led and coordinated by competent teachers and serve as spaces for, *inter alia*, research and the sharing of experiences. In addition, the awarding of diplomas to teachers who participate in such decentralized professional support services can be an important incentive. Information and communications technology can be used to scale up teacher training programmes through distance education, which can be delivered in such a way as to ensure that farmers receive information about markets and products from information technology kiosks.

47. There are effective measures to reduce inequalities in terms of educational access, participation and outcomes. Various combinations of measures are aimed at making education more affordable for the poorest communities, more accessible to the most disadvantaged learners, better adapted to local contexts and conditions, and more equitable in terms of quality of learning. While some of these measures require greater public funding, many do not.

V. Mobilizing resources for education

48. Domestic resources — both public and private — are the primary source of funding for education, which is usually the second largest budget item, after defence. Globally, slightly more national income is spent today on education than was spent a decade ago, albeit with great differences existing among countries. Economic growth rates, levels of revenue collection and political priorities are primary factors driving education spending. Resource allocation involves many hard choices, which are complicated by the long-term nature of education “returns”. Yet, before resources can be allocated, they must be mobilized. This remains a major challenge for many countries seeking to expand access and improve learning outcomes.

49. The recent global financial and economic crises have further complicated the picture, worsening already strained public finances and an already bleak outlook. At the same time, household demand for education appears to have weakened in certain developing countries as a result of falling incomes and mounting education costs. In such places, absenteeism, dropouts and child labour appear to be on the rise.

50. Even before the recent crises, and despite an overall upward trend, underinvestment in education in developing countries was a widespread concern. Changing this will require that the "fiscal space" for education spending be expanded by, *inter alia*: (a) promoting cost-recovery measures (especially for higher education and technical and vocational education and training programmes); (b) encouraging greater private sector involvement; (c) managing existing resources more efficiently; and (d) boosting aid and other potential resources, such as remittances and philanthropy. In addition, policymakers should focus initially on expanding the overall revenue base by increasing efficiency in terms of collection and accounting.

Foreign aid for education

51. After having gradually increased by more than a third since 2002 and having remained stable as a share of official development assistance, aid for education stagnated in 2008. Three key challenges in this area are: a narrow base of major donors; a growing emphasis on higher education, as opposed to basic education; and a widening financing gap.

52. Cuts in aid to basic education have been particularly severe, jeopardizing past gains. Of all regions, Africa faces the greatest shortfall, requiring an estimated \$18 billion a year to meet the education development goals by 2015. Furthermore, aid allocations should be distributed more evenly among countries.

Traditional and innovative sources of funding

53. Aid shortfalls need not derail education efforts, however. National resources devoted to education spending far outweigh aid-financed education spending nearly everywhere. Time-tested strategies such as improving the efficiency of education spending, tackling corruption and cutting back on spending in other areas (military/security outlays, for example) would make existing resources go further.

54. The private sector and foundations can also make a major contribution. The private sector can help to raise the visibility of the education sector as a critical input for economic competitiveness and can assist in identifying needs for emerging skills, in developing standards and in evaluating the effectiveness of programmes aimed at meeting the needs of the labour market. Today, the potential of the private sector and foundations to raise funds for education remains very much underutilized, especially compared with the major successes achieved for the health sector.⁶ The first estimate of corporate contributions to education in developing countries suggests that companies based in the United States of America contribute nearly half a billion dollars to education in developing countries each year, as compared with \$7 billion directed to the health sector. However, corporate contributions tend to be small and divided among many non-profit projects, with short-term grant cycles of one to three years. In addition, most contributions of corporations are not coordinated with any other actor, including the Governments of developing countries or other donors. There is a need for more data about how global companies support education in developing countries, and for donor education to increase the effectiveness of private-sector financing of education.⁷

⁶ Marten and Witte, "New philanthropy and international development", *Alliance magazine*, September 2008.

⁷ Van Fleet "A global education challenge: harnessing corporate philanthropy to educate the world's poor" (Washington, D.C., Brookings Institution, 2011).

55. Furthermore, various innovative, non-traditional funding sources have been suggested for the improvement of national finances. One example is the idea of offering policy and other incentives to lure more of the informal sector (a large component of economic activity in many developing countries) into the formal economy. Other proposals include an education tax on financial transactions, levies on the salaries of professional athletes and education "venture funds".

Education for All Fast Track Initiative

56. Launched in 2002 to scale up progress on education, the Education for All Fast Track Initiative has since produced mixed results. One study found that gains had been slowed by troubles related to governance, fledgling-donor support and a limited range of fund disbursement, especially among conflict-affected countries. However, the study also found that the Initiative's positive impact was reflected in better coordinated national education policies and the emergence of a "catalytic fund" to provide additional support.

Better partnerships for education

57. Leveraging education funding will require greater engagement across all sectors of society and among a wider range of stakeholders, from parents, teachers and local school boards to national policymakers, investors, non-governmental organizations, donor Governments and international institutions.

58. Crisis or no crisis, domestic resource flows will continue to serve as the financial backbone of education spending. Moreover, the spread of sound macroeconomic policy (promoting low inflation and low debt) will ensure that such flows are predictable, sustained and growing, which is crucial to achieving the goals of Education for All.

Box 4

Regional meetings

Four regional meetings were held in support of the preparations for the 2011 annual ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council, bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders: Governments, civil society, institutions of the United Nations system and the private sector. While education challenges were approached from various local and regional perspectives, the goals of expanding access and improving education quality were shared by all participants.

Doha was the site of the regional meeting for Western Asia, themed "Innovative approaches to reaching women, girls and the marginalized in the Arab region" and held on 9 December 2010. Issues discussed included: (a) improving the educational attainment of marginalized groups, in particular women; (b) concern about poor education results in certain Arab countries, despite relatively high levels of spending; and (c) the link between education and the region's high youth unemployment rates.

Chonburi, Thailand, played host to the regional meeting for Asia and the Pacific, themed "Education as key to achieving all Millennium Development Goals: prospects and challenges in the Asia-Pacific region" and held on 24 March 2011. Issues discussed included: (a) the large interregional disparities in terms of access and quality; (b) factors behind interregional differences in recent rates of education progress; and (c) education's positive influence on other development indicators.

The regional meeting for Africa, themed "The right to Education for All in Africa: reinforcing quality and equity", was held in Lomé, on 12 April 2011. Issues discussed included: (a) expanding the use of rights-based approaches to improve education results; (b) regional progress to date on education; and (c) ways to scale up efforts towards remaining goals.

A fourth regional meeting, for Latin America and the Caribbean, will be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on 12 and 13 May 2011 and will have the theme "Key education challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean: teachers, quality and equity". Among other things, the meeting will (a) assess regional progress towards the Education for All goals; (b) highlight major obstacles to continued progress; and (c) explore various strategies for overcoming those obstacles.

VI. The way forward and recommendations

An integrated and holistic approach to development

59. The Millennium Development Goals remain a powerful means of keeping the world's attention on development issues. In addition to being an important goal in its own right, education is widely recognized as a catalyst for the achievement of all other development goals. Increased levels of educational outcomes are shown to be intrinsically linked to long-term poverty reduction efforts, the improvement of health and the promotion of greater gender equity. Moreover, the important role of education in promoting the transition towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production is now widely accepted. Given the clear linkages between education and other development goals, as well as the catalytic role that education can play, national development efforts need to be pursued in an integrated and holistic manner. Education must be mainstreamed into the design and implementation of integrated development strategies and the acceleration of national development efforts.

Policy coherence: aligning actions across sectors

60. Progress in improving education depends not only on policies and actions implemented by the education sector or national education authorities, but also on those carried out in a wide range of other sectors. The achievement of international education development goals therefore requires a coherent and comprehensive set of policies implemented in a wide range of sectors.

61. As a result of these linkages, there is a need for governments to align actions across sectors with a view to ensuring the overall coherence of sectoral policies so as to maximize synergies and the impact of education within integrated development interventions.

Strengthening coordination and cooperation among Education for All convening agencies

62. United Nations agencies must ensure that their programmes of support for national education development efforts are made more coherent by adopting a broader view of education. Likewise, they must ensure that their education programmes are coherent with one another, as well as with broader national development goals.

63. While attempts have been made to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the five convening agencies of the Education for All movement (the United Nations Development Programme, UNESCO, the United Nations Population Fund, UNICEF and the World Bank), sustained improvement is needed in this area, in particular with regard to enhancing cooperation at the country level and building on each agency's comparative advantage and field presence. This is now recognized by the leadership of the agencies, as illustrated in the recently created task force to consider the Education for All agenda beyond 2015.

64. The five convening agencies should provide stronger leadership for Education for All and strengthen their collaboration, including through a shared understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities, at the global, regional and national levels.

Going beyond universal primary education: adopting a broader vision of education for development

65. As the broader Education for All agenda is pursued, the international community must also look more closely at the issue of access to secondary education and entry into the world of "decent" work. Evidence shows that the availability of quality secondary education is a key determinant of the completion of the primary school cycle, because secondary education is associated with economic benefits greater than those associated with primary education. It is important to promote vocational training initiatives and informal and low-threshold types of training, notably for marginalized groups of young people. While primary and other components of basic education remain a priority, the direct contribution of secondary education and skills development, in particular for young women, to the achievement of the other Millennium Development Goals needs to be recognized and planned for.

Increased spending on education

66. In order to maintain progress towards expanded and more equitable access to better-quality basic education, countries with below-average educational performance should increase their overall investment in education. The global financial crisis should not be used to justify decreased Government spending for the education sector. It is now widely accepted by the international community that no less than 6 per cent of a country's national income should

be devoted to education and that 15 to 20 per cent of a Government's budget should be dedicated to primary education.

67. While national funding remains the main source of progress towards education development goals, international financing continues to be an important supplementary source, in particular for low-income countries. It is important that donors live up to the commitments made in 2005, when they pledged to increase overall development aid from \$80 billion to \$130 billion by 2010. Moreover, donors should attach more weight to education, in particular basic education, as part of their overall development aid.

Enhanced efficiency through greater accountability and transparency

68. Higher levels of education spending alone do not suffice; ensuring that available resources are used more efficiently and allocated more equitably is just as important. Evidence from developing countries shows that strong political will is a key determinant of success in improving educational attainment, quality and equity and is, arguably, more important — at least in some contexts — than the volume of the financial resources devoted to education. There is a need for greater accountability and transparency in the delivery of education services. Improving accountability and governance by putting in place the appropriate incentives can help improve the functioning of key institutions, as they can help enhance the involvement of teachers and local officials in decision-making processes, improve resource allocation, plug resource leakages, ensure that resources reach schools, and improve human resources management.

Focus on equity through inclusive policies and targeted interventions

69. The allocation of public resources for education should serve to reduce inequities, in particular through affirmative action geared towards disadvantaged communities. If the expansion of the provision of education is to be equity-based, it must be supplemented by targeted interventions to reach marginalized groups. As part of a pro-equity approach, it may be necessary to go beyond the provision of free primary education by expanding the coverage of social protection measures and cash transfer programmes that use school enrolment and attendance as conditions for payments to households. Governments should implement inclusive policies and create programmes to better reach target groups, based on the information on marginalized populations. Such policies should include the elimination of school fees, the reduction of indirect costs associated with uniforms and textbooks, the provision of education opportunities that are closer to marginalized communities, the conduct of accelerated learning programmes for out-of-school children and young people in difficult circumstances, and the expansion of access to early-childhood care and education services.

Enhancing capacity for more effective strategic planning and implementation

70. One way of strengthening political commitment to education is through the enhancement of capacity for strategic planning and implementation. Important foundations for such strategic management of education and training are established through strengthened management and information

systems, increased relevance and availability of education indicators, improved data collection, analysis and application, and reinforced monitoring and evaluation systems. The enhancement of national capacities for strategic planning would also strengthen national ownership of international aid for education and ensure greater alignment with national development priorities. There is a critical need to further strengthen national capacities in the fields of data collection, monitoring and evaluation.

71. Planning for the provision of education and training services needs to focus more intensely than in the past on those specific characteristics of particularly marginalized groups that make service provision more difficult and limit the ability of these groups to take advantage of what is available. Despite the progress achieved in many contexts, not enough disaggregated data are available, with the result that learning outcomes cannot be sufficiently monitored. It is critical that household survey data be used with a view to the identification of patterns and causes of dropping out of school and the design of more targeted strategies for the most vulnerable children and young people.

Improving the working conditions and training of teachers

72. Teachers constitute the most important educational resource in all countries and all communities. It is thus essential that their conditions of work and their training be improved. Experience from across the world indicates that in each context, measures can be taken to improve the conditions of work and the training of teachers. Such measures include: constructively engaging teacher unions and parent-teacher associations in order to improve teacher working conditions and implement the teacher code of conduct; improving revenue collection through taxes and allocating some of those resources towards the improvement of teacher training and working conditions; setting common standards for teacher training colleges; appointing independent bodies involving public, private and civil society actors to ensure the quality assurance of teacher training institutions; appointing committed and strategic leaders to head education systems and teacher training colleges; recruiting teachers from local communities to improve motivation and reduce absenteeism; and reducing the burden of non-teaching administrative tasks such as census enumeration, election duty and other tasks. Such measures would allow teachers to have time for additional contact with learners. To ensure a comprehensive teacher policy, greater efforts should be invested in the training, retraining and retention of teachers and the improvement of their working conditions. Teachers who have regular contact with excluded families and with parents of pupils experiencing difficulty should be given special training, support and incentives. They should also be included in the development of education policies.

Improving the quality and relevance of learning

73. The relevance of learning outcomes to the multiple dimensions of societal development in specific contexts is of paramount importance if any effort is to improve the quality of education. Improving the quality and relevance of learners' experience, in turn, raises the perceived value of education among learners, their families and their communities. The development of national quality standards for different stages of education and for various types of the provision of education can allow for enhanced learning through greater

involvement by stakeholders at the local level, greater autonomy in school management, and more inclusive teaching and learning processes adapted to the needs of learners and their communities in their specific contexts. Moreover, the improvement of partnerships between schools and homes in the promotion of learning by children and young people is greatly enhanced when home and school experiences are bridged by using the mother tongue as a medium of teaching and learning, at least at the initial stages. Mother-tongue instruction greatly enhances the immediate relevance of the educational experience and facilitates the acquisition of literacy and basic learning skills.

74. For too long, assessments of learning achievement have focused narrowly on measurable cognitive skills, through the administration of large-scale national, regional and/or international tests. Attention needs to be paid to the inclusion of both locally relevant and universal values and attitudes in the assessment of learning outcomes. Improving the relevance of teaching and learning also requires the periodic review and development of curricula, for which specific budgetary allocations must be made. The implementation of new content and methods requires national/regional mechanisms that plan and coordinate the various dimensions of the updating of curricula within a system-wide approach (the design of teaching/learning materials, pre-service and in-service teacher training, learning assessment, research/evaluation and monitoring).

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Item 2 (b) of the provisional agenda*

High-level segment: annual ministerial review

**Letter dated 12 April 2011 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the
Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to
the President of the Economic and Social Council**

I have the honour to request that the report of the Western Asia regional preparatory meeting on the theme "Innovative approaches to reaching women, girls and the marginalized in the Arab region" be circulated as a document of the Economic and Social Council for consideration at its 2011 substantive session, under item 2 (b) of the provisional agenda (see annex). The meeting was held on 9 December 2010, in Doha, in preparation for the annual ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council and in connection with the second World Innovation Summit for Education.

At the regional preparatory meeting, innovative approaches to the promotion of access to quality education for women, children and the marginalized were examined as a contribution to the theme of the 2011 annual ministerial review, "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education". Qatar believes that the report will constitute a valuable contribution to the discussions at the substantive session in Geneva in July 2011.

(Signed) Alya Ahmad Al-Thani
Chargé d'affaires a.i.



**Annex to the letter dated 12 April 2011 from the Chargé d'affaires
a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations
addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council**

**Report of the Western Asia regional preparatory meeting on
education for the 2011 annual ministerial review of the Economic
and Social Council**

Summary

As part of the annual ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council, a regional preparatory meeting on the theme "Innovative approaches to reaching women, girls and the marginalized in the Arab region" was held in Doha on 9 December 2010 in preparation for the Council's 2011 annual ministerial review, which will focus on education. The meeting, held in the context of the second World Innovation Summit for Education (6-9 December 2010), was hosted by the Qatar Foundation and the Government of Qatar, in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The meeting brought together a diverse group of regional stakeholders to discuss how innovative approaches, policies and targeted interventions can help reach women, girls and the marginalized. The meeting consisted of a panel discussion and a luncheon for ministers and heads of delegation from the Arab region attending the second World Innovation Summit for Education.

Key policy messages

The following key messages emerged from the discussion:

Progress in the Arab region on the education-related Millennium Development Goals and "Education for All" goals:

- Education is a key factor for sustained, inclusive and equitable growth and for achieving all of the Millennium Development Goals.
- Countries of the region have made noticeable strides towards achieving universal primary education. However, over the last two to three years, progress has levelled off. Current education policies in the region are not retaining those who are in school or reaching out-of-school children.
- Several Arab States have made great strides on the Education for All goals. Nevertheless, according to the Education for All Development Index, no country in the region* has achieved all of the Education for All goals.

Access to education

- It is necessary to provide equitable educational and learning opportunities for women, girls and marginalized groups by removing economic, social, religious and political barriers to education. This requires inclusive education systems as well as appropriate and targeted measures both outside and within the education sector.

- Governments need to ensure adequate national education budgets in order to address, inter alia, infrastructure, human resources, financial and administrative constraints. Adequate and predictable international support for education should be provided, including through new and voluntary approaches for education financing, South-South cooperation, triangular cooperation and other innovative partnerships.
- There is need to redouble efforts to provide access to education in emergency situations for all affected populations.

Education quality

- All stakeholders should work together to ensure quality education, reduce drop-out, repetition and failure rates by establishing child-friendly schools with relevant curricula and adopt active and cooperative pedagogic approaches and learning and teaching materials that are gender sensitive. The capabilities of information and communications technology should be harnessed, in particular for those outside the formal education system.
- There is urgent need to increase the number of teachers and enhance the quality of their teaching through comprehensive cross-sectoral policies that address issues of recruitment, pre-service and in-service training, retention, professional development, evaluation, employment and teaching conditions, as well as teacher status.
- School conditions should be enhanced by building more classrooms and improving the conditions of school buildings and infrastructure, including by prioritizing investment in head teachers and school administrators. Particular attention should be paid to providing sanitary and other facilities for girls, thus removing one of their key obstacles.

Stakeholders in education

- Governments bear the primary responsibility for providing an appropriate framework for realizing the right of everyone to education. Through innovative approaches, the private sector and civil society can assist in providing access to education for marginalized groups.
 - There is need to engage the private sector to facilitate the transition from basic education, vocational training, higher education and non-formal education into the labour market.
 - Quality, accountability and transparency should be promoted through better involvement of parents and communities in the running of schools.
- Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen and Palestine.

I. Introduction

1. In July 2011, the Economic and Social Council will hold its fifth annual ministerial review in Geneva. The review will focus on "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education".
2. On 9 December 2011, a regional preparatory meeting for the Arab region was hosted by the Qatar Foundation and the Government of Qatar, in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).
3. The meeting brought together a diverse group of regional stakeholders, experts from the United Nations system and other international organizations, non-governmental organizations, academia and the private sector to discuss how innovative approaches, policies and targeted interventions can help to reach women, girls and the marginalized.
4. The meeting provided an important opportunity for the Arab countries to contribute to the annual ministerial review, including by sharing best practices and lessons learned.

II. Proceedings of the regional preparatory meeting

A. Opening session

5. In his welcome remarks, Saad Bin Ibrahim Al Mahmoud, Minister of Education and Higher Education of Qatar, outlined the rapid progress made by his country in reaching the education-related Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All goals. At the same time, he underscored that, for the region as a whole, the delivery of education to women, girls and marginalized groups remains a major challenge and should receive more attention and support. In particular, the exchange of expertise between countries needs to increase. Regional consultations such as the regional preparatory meetings for the annual ministerial review could help countries identify innovative, effective methods to deliver education to all, including to women, girls and marginalized groups in the Arab world. The Minister noted that the findings of the meeting will provide an important input into the upcoming session of the 2011 annual ministerial review.
6. Dr. Fathy Saoud, President of the Qatar Foundation, said that there are three main principles that guided programmes at the Qatar Foundation. First, all programmes should be of the highest quality. Second, they should be seen as a part of a continuum in a holistic system from basic to higher education, and from basic to funded research. Third, in today's knowledge economy, education becomes a key power in triggering social and economic change while preserving national identity, values and culture. Based on the three principles, Education for All is more important than ever. Innovative partnership models could also help an education model as well as cutting-edge research.
7. In his opening remarks, Hamidon Ali, President of the Economic and Social Council and Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations, congratulated Qatar for being selected to host the 2022 World Cup football

tournament and underscored the important links between sports and education. He noted that the 2010 United Nations summit on the Millennium Development Goals in New York had reaffirmed the central role of education in achieving all of the Goals. However, local, national and international funding for education must become more reliable, and such funding must be supplemented by new innovative approaches involving civil society and the public sector. In regard to the special focus of the meeting on reaching women, girls and the marginalized in the Arab region, attention will have to be paid to non-formal approaches to education that promote quality and accountability through more extensive involvement of parents and communities.

8. In order to measure progress, enrolment ratios and out-of-school figures must be monitored to address the prominent regional variations, as well as the stark gender disparities in the Arab countries. Ambassador Ali remarked that despite serious challenges it should not be forgotten that considerable progress in advancing the quality of life has been realized, especially as regards women. He ended with a positive message, noting that in 2005 the average woman could expect to live one third longer than would have been likely in 1955, is less likely to suffer from disease and deprivation and much more likely to be literate and educated.

9. Thomas Stelzer, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, said that education is arguably the most important building block in what economists call human capital. Nobel laureate Gary Becker rightly argued that education is an investment, no different from any other; put in too little and returns rarely satisfy. UNESCO, in its latest global education report, estimates that achieving the Millennium Development Goal of universal access to primary education in least developed countries by 2015 will require closing an annual financing gap of \$16 billion. However, just as importantly, the money needs to be invested more effectively. As highlighted in a recent study by McKinsey, high spending alone will not ensure better learning outcomes. This finding is of particular relevance for the Arab region given that, despite high spending, learning outcomes remain poor in a number of countries. On the ground, more schools must be built and many new teachers hired. Arab States themselves are expected to account for around 15 per cent of total demand for new teachers. With regard to the theme of the meeting, Mr. Stelzer noted that globally two thirds of the world's illiterate are female and that of the millions of out-of-school children girls make up the majority. He said that getting more girls and other marginalized groups in Arab society into school will demand surmounting many economic, social, religious and political barriers. He concluded that, despite these challenges, the goal of truly universal primary education is within reach.

B. Panel discussion: Innovative approaches to reach women, girls and the marginalized in the Arab region

10. Abdel Moneim Osman, Director of the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States and UNESCO Representative to Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, moderated the panel discussion. In his opening remarks he recalled that Arab women and girls are still facing major barriers in accessing quality education, which hampered their later participation in the labour market. Only 9 of 19 Arab countries have achieved gender parity in primary education.

Illiteracy among women and girls remains a major challenge, especially in rural areas. He asked the panellists to focus on two main issues. First, how the participation in and access of women, girls and the marginalized to education might be improved by employing innovative ideas to address the challenges Arab countries confront, including conflict, internal displacements, lack of facilities, high fertility rates and poverty. Second, how gender bias in education favouring boys might be removed through targeted interventions, for example, by setting up community centres that can reach women and girls in remote areas and ensure the availability of separate sanitary facilities for boys and girls.

11. Hassan Mneimneh, Minister of Education and Higher Education of Lebanon, noted the central role of education in reaching all Millennium Development Goals. He said that Lebanon considers education as the only way for the country to progress. While the first step is to ensure access to education for all, it is equally important that education should provide children with knowledge that enables them to successfully enter the job market. To ensure access for all, Lebanon has passed legislation making education compulsory up to the age of 15. In addition, Lebanon has made the development of teachers' skills and the design of incentives for delivering better quality teaching a priority. This focus on teachers is backed by recent research showing that good teachers are a more important determinant for students' learning achievements than the quality of school premises.

12. Yasar Jarrar, Partner in Advisory Services for PricewaterhouseCoopers in the Middle East, said that innovation can help address the many educational challenges of the Arab region. He said that, to date, innovators had received little support from Governments. Innovative solutions have emerged despite rather than because of Governments. He acknowledged the important role of Governments as guardians of the public value of education, but said that they should reach out to the private sector and civil society. These groups can help to provide education more efficiently by promoting social innovation from the ground up. Mr. Jarrar cited several examples of community-based innovative solutions, such as the E-University, which promoted female enrolment in Saudi Arabia and the "Education as cultural freedom and self-learning" (Centre for Education and Development of Rural Women), which has helped to promote gender equality. To more systematically promote such innovative solutions, Mr. Jarrar called on Governments to de-politicize education and to adopt laws and regulations that provide a framework that enables the private sector and philanthropists to be part of the solution.

13. Mohamed El Aziz Ben Achour, Director General of the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization, stressed that a main reform trend in education towards more participation of women and more tolerance can only be achieved in close partnership with all ministries related to education. He also highlighted the need to address the large urban rural divide in terms of access to education. He identified teachers as the backbone of the educational process and said that more attention should be paid to training them. Education should equip students with life skills so that they can enter the working world with confidence. He also suggested that the values of quality education should be linked to cultural values and should include promotion of knowledge, tolerance and respect for others. For the realization of such an objective, he explained that the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization is responsible for the design and implementation of an effective education plan in the Arab world.

14. Shahinaz Ahmed, Chief Executive Officer of Education for Employment Foundation in Egypt, presented an innovative response to the large youth unemployment problem in the Arab region. She explained that a key element of the model of the Education for Employment Foundation, a non-profit foundation, is to engage the private sector at an early stage and to ensure that employers participate throughout the process. She outlined the different steps of the process. First, communication with the private sector has to be initiated and curricula must be designed to respond to its needs. Second, a transparent selection process of potential employees and individual education programmes are designed in close cooperation with future employers to teach employees missing skills. The main challenges are to convince the private sector to participate in the programme, retaining students and ensuring that candidates graduating from the programme find work with the private sector partner rather than with the public sector, which is perceived to offer greater job security.

15. Amin Amin, founder and Chief Executive Officer of Change Agent for Arab Development & Education Reform (CADER) in Jordan, presented the work of CADER, a public-private partnership started in 2004. The organization promotes human capacity-building and professional development for educators in the Arab world through a comprehensive six-month professional development programme. The programme is based on a change management methodology integrating ICT to promote the processes of teaching, learning and working. Mr. Amin emphasized that in order to be effective, solutions have to be tailored to local needs, be practical and incorporate awareness and beliefs in the need for change and development. In its teacher training programme, the organization aims to foster key skills such as leadership, communication, coaching, project management and training and facilitation. In Jordan, where CADER is based, specific innovative education programmes such as the "Education reform support programme" and the "Jordan schools project" have already been implemented. Additional projects in other Arab countries, including Palestine, Qatar and Yemen, are being organized demonstrating the scalability and sustainability of the programme.

16. In his concluding remarks, Abdel Moneim Osman noted that several speakers called for legislative reforms to promote social innovation through public-private partnerships. Panellists also identified the need to support innovation at the local level. Several speakers emphasized that more attention has to be paid to rural and urban differences in education since these are often masked when looking at average figures at the country level. The great potential of information and communications technologies in providing access to education for marginalized groups, including in remote areas, was highlighted. The need to strengthen the link between education and employment was also stressed. The involvement of employers in the formulation of curricula was mentioned as one way to ensure a smoother transition for youth into the labour market.

C. Ministerial luncheon

17. Saad Bin Ibrahim Al Mahmoud, Minister of Education and Higher Education of Qatar, delivered welcome remarks and highlighted the importance of the regional preparatory meeting for the annual ministerial review in providing a forum to exchange innovative ideas on how to promote education in the Arab region. He called on ministers and distinguished participants to deepen the discussions on

innovative approaches to reach women, girls and the marginalized at the upcoming 2011 annual ministerial review.

18. Fatima Mohammed Al Balooshi, Minister of Social Development of Bahrain, noted that since Governments are responsible for providing quality education, they need to find ways to make quality education accessible for all its citizens. This requires removing barriers that prevent marginalized groups from accessing education. Since most barriers are not limited to the field of education, what is needed is an integrated approach that addresses other economic, social and cultural barriers to education. Improving educational outcomes therefore requires an integrated approach that addresses the multiple barriers. Partnerships with the private sector or civil society can play a crucial role in building capacities and in working towards shared social progress. The three complementary instruments of microcredit, promotion of entrepreneurship and vocational training have to be more actively promoted to make education relevant for learners, as has been successfully used in the case of Bahrain.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

19. In his closing remarks, Thomas Stelzer, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, highlighted three key messages taken from the discussions. First, despite a mixed scorecard, the education-related Millennium Development Goals remain achievable in the Arab region. The positive spirit of the meeting and the "can do" mentality of participants were particularly encouraging in this regard. Second, he noted that participants agreed that there is a need to redouble efforts to improve the quality of education and to reach the most marginalized groups of society. Third, the meeting illustrated that while there are no ready-made solutions, there are valuable lessons that countries can learn from each other's experiences.

20. He noted that countries that adopted the following five policies had made particularly impressive progress: removal of financial barriers to education; increasing national and international funding for education; provision of gender-friendly basic services; eradication of gender stereotypes in curricula and teaching practices; and innovative use of information and communications technologies. Mr. Stelzer encouraged ministers and participants to remain engaged with the Economic and Social Council through to the ministerial review in July 2011 in Geneva, where Qatar will share the highlights of the discussions at the regional preparatory meeting with the Council.

Recommendations

- Provide equitable educational and learning opportunities for women, girls and marginalized groups by removing economic, social and geographical barriers to education through inclusive education systems, as well as appropriate and targeted measures both outside and within the education sector.
- Ensure adequate national education budgets to address, *inter alia*, infrastructure, human resources, financial and administrative constraints.

- Provide adequate and predictable international support for education, including through new, voluntary and innovative approaches for financing education that should supplement, but not be a substitute for, traditional sources of finance, as well as through South-South cooperation, triangular cooperation and other forms of innovative partnerships.
- Redouble efforts to realize the right to education, including in emergency situations.
- Ensure quality education and reduce drop-out, repetition and failure rates by establishing child-friendly schools with relevant curricula, active and cooperative pedagogic approaches and learning and teaching materials.
- Harness the capabilities of information and communications technology, in particular for people outside the formal education system and for lifelong learning.
- Increase the number of teachers and enhance the quality of their teaching through comprehensive cross-sectoral policies that address issues of recruitment, pre-service and in-service training, retention, professional development, evaluation, employment and teaching conditions as well as teacher status.
- Improve school conditions by building more classrooms and improving the conditions of school buildings and infrastructure, including by prioritizing investment in head teachers and school administrators. Particular attention should be paid to providing sanitary and other facilities for girls, thus removing one of their key obstacles.
- Recognize that Governments bear the primary responsibility for providing an appropriate framework for realizing the right to education.
- Engage the private sector and civil society organizations to assist Governments in providing access to quality education to the marginalized.
- Involve the private sector in developing educational programmes.
- Promote quality, accountability and transparency through better involvement of parents and communities in the running of schools.

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The role of the United Nations system in implementing the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the 2010 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council

The role of the United Nations system in implementing the internationally agreed development goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The coordination segment will focus on the role of the United Nations system in promoting the implementation of the ministerial declaration adopted by the Economic and Social Council in 2010. The present report addresses ways in which the system can strengthen its capacity to ensure coordinated action, with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in the leadership role. It then reviews progress made by the United Nations system on the cross-cutting issues identified in the ministerial declaration. Recommendations on both aspects are included in the final section of the document.

* E/2011/100.

** The present report was prepared in close collaboration with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system.



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2008/29, the Economic and Social Council decided that its coordination segment should be devoted to the review of the implementation of the ministerial declaration adopted at the previous year's annual ministerial review. The main theme of the coordination segment in 2011 therefore focuses on implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

2. The adoption of the 2010 ministerial declaration coincided with the establishment of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) by the General Assembly. In just one year, much has been accomplished to put in place the structures of UN-Women, define its priorities of work and address its relations with the entities of the United Nations system. The coordination segment of the Council agenda offers an opportunity to take stock of progress made in strengthening the coordinated approach of the United Nations system to gender equality and the empowerment of women. With UN-Women in the leadership role, it also provides an opportunity to assess how the new architecture contributes to promoting attention for gender issues across all areas, as called for in the ministerial declaration. It is this aspect which will be the focus of the first chapter of this report.

3. Adopted two months before the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals, the ministerial declaration highlighted the strong linkages between gender equality and the empowerment of women to the broader development agenda. The declaration also broke new ground in that, for the first time, an intergovernmental body highlighted a number of cross-cutting issues, where action was expected to positively enhance the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women. The second chapter will therefore focus on how the United Nations system uses cross-cutting issues as leverage to accelerate progress and proceed in a coordinated manner.

4. The report does not cover all the activities carried out by the United Nations system in this field. An annual report on mainstreaming a gender perspective in all United Nations system activities is being submitted to the Council and will be considered under agenda item 7 (e). In order to avoid duplication, the present report will not focus on this dimension and should be seen in conjunction with the report mentioned above.

II. Strengthening the coordinated approach of the United Nations system to gender issues, with UN-Women in the leadership role

5. In its resolution 62/277, the General Assembly decided that continuing efforts on system-wide coherence should focus on gender equality and the empowerment of women as one of its four priority areas.¹ By identifying gender equality and the empowerment of women as a priority area for system-wide coherence, the General

¹ The other three priority areas were: the United Nations delivering as one at the country level with the related aspect of harmonization of business practices, funding and governance.

Assembly ushered in a period of intense consultation that led to the reform of the gender equality architecture of the United Nations and the establishment of UN-Women through the adoption of resolution 64/289.

6. Prior to the establishment of UN-Women, a number of gaps in and challenges to the existing architecture had been identified. These gaps included weak coordination between intergovernmental decision- and policymaking and implementation at country level; lack of a recognized driver with the authority and positioning to lead; lack of representation in high-level policy decision-making; lack of accountability, political will and support for gender equality, and inadequate system-wide standards; inadequate resources, both human and financial; inadequate country-level support to translate the gender analysis in Common Country Assessments/United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks into specific gender-related outcomes; and insufficient emphasis on country-driven demands and ownership.

7. Expectations are high that UN-Women will address these gaps and challenges in line with paragraph 52 of its founding resolution, which states that "the establishment of the Entity and the conduct of its work should lead to more effective coordination, coherence and gender mainstreaming across the United Nations system".

8. With a new organizational structure aimed at creating synergies between the normative and operational support functions, strengthened leadership and full representation on the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) and its three pillars, UN-Women is positioned to lead the United Nations system in supporting the efforts of Member States to implement their commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women as called for in the ministerial declaration,

A. The vision and priorities of UN-Women

9. In accordance with its founding resolution, the work of UN-Women is grounded in internationally agreed norms, particularly those related to gender equality, including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,² the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"³ and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.⁴

10. The United Nations system has made great strides in recognizing gender equality as not just a women's issue, but a human rights issue and a development issue. Empowering women and girls is increasingly being understood as essential to the achievement of gender equality and a prerequisite for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals.

11. The work of UN-Women will centre around five core principles: providing demand-driven support to national partners to enhance implementation of international agreements and standards; supporting intergovernmental processes to

² *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

³ Resolution S-23/2, annex, and resolution S-23/3, annex.

⁴ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1249, No. 20378.

strengthen the global normative and policy framework on gender equality; advocating for gender equality and women's empowerment and championing the rights of women and girls — particularly those most excluded; leading and promoting coherence in the work of the United Nations system on gender equality; and acting as a broker of knowledge and experience, aligning practice with normative guidance.

12. Guided by these principles, UN-Women has sought the views of Member States, United Nations system partners, and civil society through wide consultation, and has prepared a strategic plan to be considered by the Executive Board in June 2011. UN-Women proposes to focus on five thematic priority areas in its operational activities. The rationale and vision for the work in each of these areas are addressed below.

1. Expanding women's voice, leadership and participation

13. UN-Women will work with partners to close the gaps in women's leadership and participation in all sectors and demonstrate the benefits of such leadership for society as a whole. Although considerable work has been undertaken to strengthen women's participation at the national and global levels, more remains to be done. Ensuring that women attain their rightful place in decision-making assures their self-determination and increases their investment in the achievement of broader economic, social and political goals.

2. Ending violence against women

14. The strategy of UN-Women will address all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls. It will support Member States in establishing the mechanisms necessary to formulate and enforce laws, policies and services that protect women and girls, promote the involvement of men and boys, and prevent violence.

3. Strengthening implementation of women's peace and security agenda

15. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by the perils of armed conflict, yet women are an untapped resource for contributing to conflict prevention and resolution. UN-Women will build on the momentum created by the tenth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in October 2010 to support a coordinated approach by the United Nations system to implement resolution 1325 and increase women's participation in conflict prevention and resolution. In this regard, UN-Women is leading the development of a strategic framework within the United Nations system, with associated targets and indicators. In addition, the Peacebuilding Support Office and UN-Women are currently planning a three-year programme on gender-responsive peacebuilding, which will address empowering women to engage effectively in national peace and reconstruction efforts.

4. Enhancing the economic empowerment of women

16. As emphasized in the ministerial declaration, the economic empowerment of women is particularly important in the context of the global economic and environmental crises. UN-Women will support coordination between partners within the United Nations system to ensure the full realization of women's economic

security and rights, including to productive assets and social protection, with a specific focus on rural women.

5. Making gender equality priorities central to national, local and sectoral planning, budgeting and statistics

17. Sustainable and meaningful change will not occur in the situation of women and girls unless adequate resources are allocated to that end at the country level. Working with United Nations country teams and other partners, UN-Women will support Member States, at their request, in adopting evidence-based planning and budgeting methods and building capacity to collect and analyse statistics, with a view to formulating and costing gender equality plans; ensuring gender-responsive budgeting; and supporting reporting and implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

B. Ensuring overall coordination, coherence and accountability

18. While UN-Women has identified the priorities mentioned above for its work together with its partners, collaboration with other parts of the United Nations system to deliver concrete and sustainable results remains essential. In this regard, UN-Women was tasked by the General Assembly to lead, coordinate and promote accountability on gender equality and women's empowerment in the United Nations system. Past experience has shown that coordination and coherence in gender equality work have been hindered by various factors, including weak linkages between intergovernmental agreements and implementation on the ground, and lack of channels to provide feedback from the national level on what works and what does not. UN-Women has prepared a coordination strategy with dedicated capacity to strengthen coordination, coherence, efficiency and accountability within the United Nations system. This capacity will also support the enhancement of partnerships with other relevant stakeholders, including civil society, to achieve gender equality goals, as set out in the ministerial declaration.

19. At the centre of the UN-Women coordination strategy is a commitment to work with the existing United Nations system coordination mechanisms and tools relevant to gender equality at all levels, streamlining and strengthening them where necessary, as well as establishing the missing linkages between them. Lessons learned and promising practices from existing coordination mechanisms, including the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the humanitarian coordination system supported by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Resident Coordinator system, and the "Delivering as one" initiative will further inform the way UN-Women executes its coordination mandate.

1. Coordination at the global level

20. At the global level UN-Women will work through CEB. Its three pillars, the High-level Committee on Programmes, the High-level Committee on Management and the United Nations Development Group, provide important platforms through which UN-Women can promote coherence in policies directly relating to gender equality at global and country level, as well as ensuring that all United Nations system policies reflect the appropriate gender perspective. The senior level membership of UN-Women in all of these bodies now provides new opportunities to

establish stronger linkages between their decision-making, and the work of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality. The Network brings together the focal points on gender from across the United Nations system to enhance coherence, share best practices and develop common approaches on issues central to gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN-Women will support the Network, and will continue to facilitate several of the inter-agency subgroups addressing key issues, including violence against women, women's peace and security and women's economic empowerment.

2. Coordination at the regional level

21. The United Nations regional commissions host the regional coordination mechanisms which bring together all the United Nations system entities working in that region. UN-Women will work through the regional coordination mechanisms to promote attention for the needs and priorities of women and girls within the context of the cluster system and gender clusters where they exist. The mechanisms will also be encouraged to feed their respective policy decisions, especially those on gender equality, to the Regional Directors' teams for follow-up at the country level.

3. Coordination at the country level

22. At the country level, UN-Women will work through the Resident Coordinator system and the United Nations country teams to promote and coordinate the work on gender equality, providing support to the gender working groups using guidance from the United Nations Development Group Gender Task Team.

4. Accountability

23. In addition to its role to lead and coordinate the work of the United Nations system on gender equality and the empowerment of women, the founding resolution called on UN-Women to promote accountability across the United Nations system for its performance in these areas. Effective results from gender mainstreaming require an institutionalized system-wide accountability mechanism on gender equality. While annual gender mainstreaming reports to the Economic and Social Council have indicated that some United Nations entities have incorporated gender equality into their respective accountability frameworks, institutional capacity for accountability for system-wide performance on gender mainstreaming remains inadequate. It is therefore critical to develop a system-wide accountability framework for gender mainstreaming. In 2006, CEB called on United Nations entities to develop and implement a system-wide strategy and action plan on gender mainstreaming, but this has not yet been undertaken.

24. UN-Women will work through the CEB mechanisms, the Resident Coordinator system and with the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality to develop an agreed system-wide accountability framework, and an action plan to make this operational, so that individual parts of the United Nations system, and the system as a whole, can hold themselves accountable for commitments made in terms of gender mainstreaming. Such a framework could reflect the kinds of tools each individual entity should be using (as many are already) to mainstream gender and monitor their own performance at the institutional level. Tools could include the use of a common "gender marker" to track resource allocation, like that already used by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations

Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee supported by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

25. The framework could also include the use of common indicators to measure the impact of United Nations support for gender equality at country level, as is already being done by gender working groups in 99 countries. The Resident Coordinator annual reports currently include information from these working groups, thus providing a sound basis for future analysis.

III. Closing the implementation gap in gender equality and empowerment of women in a coordinated manner

26. This chapter reviews progress made by the United Nations system in enhancing gender equality and the empowerment of women using the prism of the cross-cutting issues identified in the ministerial declaration. It is based on the contribution of United Nations system entities and highlights their individual and joint activities. A specific section on health has been added, given the important role played by United Nations system entities in this field and its high relevance for the achievement of all development goals.

A. Discriminatory attitudes and gender stereotypes, including in the education sector

27. The United Nations system is committed to promoting comprehensive and coherent approaches to ending discrimination against women. A major vehicle for this consists of the assistance provided to countries in addressing discriminatory attitudes and gender stereotypes in the education system. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and UNICEF are leading these efforts in relation to literacy and basic education and UNESCO has engaged in a policy dialogue with African countries on this matter. Gender analysis of primary school textbooks has been carried out, and a pilot package of gender training modules for teachers will be developed shortly. A relevant example in this field is the education programme carried out by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), supported by UNESCO, through which local textbooks have been analysed and measures taken to ensure that UNRWA teachers use neutral language and avoid gender stereotypes.

28. Efforts are also being made to ensure that gender equality is mainstreamed into educational policies, especially as regards technical and vocational education and higher education. A specific area of concern is the continuing lack of interest and opportunities for women and girls in ICT-related careers, which perpetuate stereotypical roles in society and are likely to lead to a shortfall in ICT professionals in the next 10-15 years. In collaboration with UN-Women, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has engaged in a process of sensitizing other United Nations agencies on this matter. In addition, ITU intends to establish an international "Girls in ICT day", whereby ICT companies, training institutions and universities will be called upon to organize an open day for girls.

29. Agencies have also developed specific tools, such as a module of the ITU "Connect a school, connect a community" online toolkit on how to develop community ICT centres to promote the empowerment of women. Similarly, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) promotes gender-sensitive education and skills acquisition for industrial development through the Entrepreneurship Curriculum Programme. Through this course, already delivered in 1,400 schools, girls are encouraged to venture into non-traditional entrepreneurial initiatives that challenge the stereotypes of society and develop a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship, business and self-employment. The recently established ITU-UNESCO Broadband Commission for Digital Development has also underscored the role of broadband in implementing Millennium Development Goal 3.

30. Advocating for women's human rights is an important vehicle for United Nations system efforts to address stereotypes and discrimination. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) presented a thematic study on discrimination against women⁵ to the fifteenth session of the Human Rights Council in September 2010. A related plenary panel discussion was held around the potential establishment of a special mechanism of the Council on discriminatory laws and practices, resulting in the establishment on 4 October 2010 of a working group on discrimination against women in law and in practice.

31. Other United Nations system organizations, such as UNICEF, UNESCO, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and UNFPA, have used a rights-based approach to promote gender equality. For example, UNFPA has been advocating for the links between maternal mortality, gender equality and human rights and supports the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in drafting a general comment on the right to sexual and reproductive health. The reporting process of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is also a valuable opportunity for United Nations country teams to work together to support Governments in this exercise. Over the last five years, more than 50 country teams have provided coordinated support for preparation of reports on the Convention.

32. Although some communications activities, such as a UNESCO training programme for journalists, are carried out in this field by the United Nations system, the system would benefit from elaborating media strategies on discriminatory attitudes and gender stereotypes as a tool for outreach and better long-term impact.

B. Ending all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls across all sectors

33. Violence against women and girls is a pervasive problem that continues to affect all societies around the world, and such a complex problem demands a holistic solution. The United Nations system is called upon to develop a more coherent response, building on the efforts of the Secretary-General's campaign "UNiTE to End Violence against Women" and the complementary "Say NO — UNiTE to End Violence against Women" campaign. The UN-Women strategy will address all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls and will support Member States in this field. Development of national capacities is

⁵ A/HRC/15/40.

undertaken via inter-agency mechanisms such as the Inter-agency Task Force on Violence against Women co-chaired by UN-Women and UNFPA.

34. A major challenge in addressing violence against women lies in developing multisectoral approaches. An interesting example where the United Nations system has developed such an approach is in connection with HIV/AIDS. UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNDP and UN-Women have undertaken joint activities, based on the recognition that violence can be both a cause and a consequence of HIV. The UNAIDS strategy aims to ensure that 50 per cent of high HIV-prevalence countries integrate HIV into the Secretary-General's UNiTE campaign and that at least 15 of them initiate a comprehensive set of actions to address and prevent violence against women. The joint initiative, United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, has been the driving force for the "Stop Rape Now" campaign.

35. In November 2010, UNDP convened a global meeting to advance the integration of initiatives to combat gender-based violence into national plans relating to HIV. At the regional and country level, United Nations joint teams have worked to include HIV in the UNiTE campaign and to undertake joint launches, focusing on issues relevant to the different regions, such as sex workers in Asia, violence in post-conflict countries in West and Central Africa and refugee camps in East Africa. This collaboration has been fruitful, yet it remains a challenge to integrate HIV into UNiTE campaign activities in many countries.

36. Similarly, efforts are being made to integrate responses to violence against women in poverty reduction strategies through economic costing and gender budgeting. This has become a key strategy for UNDP, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean. UNDP, the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNFPA are working together to collect, use and analyse sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics, including developing culturally relevant statistical methodologies. At the field level, and as part of the "16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence" campaign in November and December 2010,⁶ UNRWA organized more than 100 events in Gaza, Jordan, Syria, and the West Bank, involving its health, education and relief and social services programmes.

37. A UNFPA-UNICEF joint programme on female genital mutilation/cutting has been established to contribute to the accelerated abandonment of these practices, in specific areas of implementation within 12 countries and globally, by 2012. Specific efforts are also being carried out to address sexual violence against adolescent girls. "Together for Girls" is an interesting multipartner initiative in this field, which brings together a wide range of United Nations and other organizations.

38. Since the adoption of the ministerial declaration, OHCHR has organized an expert workshop on the elimination of all forms of violence against women, in preparation of which a compilation of good practices in efforts to prevent violence against women was prepared. A summary of the outcome of this workshop will be presented to the seventeenth session of the Human Rights Council in June 2011. In addition, part of the annual full-day discussion of the Council on women's human rights will now be dedicated to the prevention of violence against women.

⁶ The calendar and activities are available on <http://16dayscwgl.rutgers.edu/campaign-calendar> and <http://www.saynotoviolence.org/user/751>.

39. Joint system-wide efforts have been particularly visible in conflict and post-conflict settings, including through the leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Among recent joint initiatives, it is worth mentioning the elaboration by OHCHR, in conjunction with UN-Women, of a guidance note on reparations for conflict-related sexual violence, which will clarify the roles and responsibilities of various actors in advancing programmes to benefit survivors of sexual violence.

40. Efforts have also been made to operationalize the team of experts established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1888 (2009). This team of experts is to be rapidly deployed to situations of particular concern with respect to sexual violence in armed conflict in order to assist national authorities to strengthen the rule of law.

41. As co-leader responsible for implementing paragraph 8 of resolution 1888 (2009) on women and peace and security, UNDP is strengthening its efforts to counter impunity for sexual violence and is building national capacity to uphold the rule of law. This includes enhancing the capacity of judicial officials and religious leaders to ensure women's access to justice, through both formal and informal processes.

42. An important country-specific mechanism is the high-level panel convened by the High Commissioner for Human Rights in August 2010 to address the needs of victims of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including remedies and reparations planned to be made available to them.

43. In all peacekeeping operations, the Department for Peacekeeping Operations/ Department of Field Support works in close collaboration with UN-Women, UNFPA and UNDP to prevent and protect women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence. Joint activities, such as assisting host countries to draft and adopt legislation related to sexual and gender-based violence, were carried out in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Timor-Leste, together with the development of national strategies to respond effectively to meet the needs of victims/survivors. Jointly coordinated capacity-building activities such as training, especially for the police and judicial staff, in the prevention, investigation and prosecution of sexual and gender-based violence are regular activities in the field. Peacekeeping missions, together with UN-Women, UNFPA, UNDP and OHCHR, have developed modules for better response to sexual and gender-based violence cases through setting up of one-stop centres for counselling, medical and legal support to victims/survivors of violence.

C. Measures to ensure the full empowerment of women, including equal participation of women and men in decision-making

44. The need to enhance women's roles as leaders and decision makers in all sectors is emphasized in the ministerial declaration. Much remains to be done in this field. Enhanced coordination within the United Nations system, with UN-Women as leader, is essential to harness the expertise of all of its components, as well as build on the partnerships that each has established. Progress in this area would support broader social change and help tackle discriminatory attitudes and gender stereotypes, and strengthen the potential of women as agents of change, opening a path for the empowerment of women across sectors.

45. UNDP has carried out activities to promote women's political participation, through support for electoral assistance, parliamentary support and strengthening constitutional reforms. UNDP also works with UN-Women and other partners to support the International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics, a leading knowledge portal designed to serve the needs of all actors interested in advancing women in politics.

46. OHCHR and ILO facilitate an enabling environment for inclusive employment, through positive employment programmes and supporting women's entrepreneurship. Such actions for the economic empowerment of women include gender-sensitive legal and institutional changes in compliance with human rights and ILO standards, greater recognition of the right to equal pay for equal work, elimination of barriers to access credit, training, technology and land, and legal guarantees of property and inheritance rights.

47. In this respect, FAO promotes gender equality in land tenure and access, both as information provider and in supporting countries to effectively integrate gender considerations in land tenure programmes. To that end, an international database on gender and land rights, including data on 24 different subjects for 78 countries has been developed. According to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), women have made significant strides towards achieving equality in intellectual property rights, both in terms of opportunities and of recognition. Special efforts are made to include women in WIPO training and educational programmes.

48. The agenda of UN-Women will be based on the principle that the economic empowerment of women is essential to combating poverty and promoting human security. In this regard, building on the agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-fifth session, UN-Women will advocate for improving women's access to formal and non-formal education and training, particularly in science and technology, and will coordinate its efforts with other parts of the United Nations system towards enhancing women's access to full employment and decent work.

D. The critical role of men and boys

49. In the Plan of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development,⁷ the Beijing Platform for Action⁸ and the agreed conclusions of the forty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (2004) the importance of male involvement for the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment was expressed. However, inter-agency efforts on the role of men and boys have not been extensive to date.

50. Through the Partners for Prevention Programme, UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Women and others have developed ways to work with men and boys in addressing gender-based violence in Asia and the Pacific. Good examples of UNDP support for the role of men and boys have been developed in several countries and regions, including

⁷ *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5-13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

⁸ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

Northern Sudan, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

51. Some United Nations entities have included this approach in their activities. UNICEF has developed internal guidance on the issue and held a side event at the 2010 session of the Commission on the Status of Women, looking specifically at the role of men and boys in gender equality. UNFPA also engages in ongoing global advocacy and mobilizes civil society organizations which are male-led or working on male engagement for gender equality.

52. The establishment of UN-Women is an opportunity to increase system-wide coordination in regard to the role of men and boys in the promotion of gender equality. The achievement of significant social, political or economic changes in a society will be impossible with the support of only half of the population.

E. The full integration of women into the formal economy

53. Given the economic development focus of several agencies, the United Nations system plays an active role in promoting the integration of women into the formal economy. Most activities are carried out by individual entities within their respective mandates. Joint initiatives will be further developed under the leadership of UN-Women, which is committed to promoting a "business case" for the economic empowerment of women.

54. UNDP has developed a number of tools to accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals by making poverty reduction and economic policies benefit women and men, boys and girls equally. The Gender and Economic Policy Management Initiative is a regional initiative that addresses gender-related capacity constraints in economic policy formulation and implementation of macroplanning in Africa and Asia. During 2010, new policy tools were developed to address the gender implications of taxation, trade and employment guarantee schemes, and to examine the implications of the financial and economic crisis.

55. The collaboration on women's economic empowerment between the World Bank Group and the former United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM, now UN-Women) resulted in the gender action plan entitled "Gender Equality as Smart Economics". Pilot interventions are being implemented designed to empower women economically, measure the key indicators of this empowerment, and most importantly, attribute the outcomes to the interventions. In addition, in 2010, the World Bank commissioned the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) to develop a women's economic opportunity index. The EIU produced its first report in July 2010.

56. United Nations agencies have made similar diagnostics, although in different economic sectors, as to the constraints faced by female-owned or operated enterprises as a result of discriminatory attitudes that inhibit them from maximizing their potential, joining business and employers' associations and integrating fully into the formal economy. Efforts are increasingly being made to provide responses to this state of affairs.

57. UNIDO promotes the development of female entrepreneurship, particularly in rural areas, through bottom-up growth strategies. One successful example of such activities is an ongoing project in the southern part of Mali aimed at building the

capacity of women's groups to produce shea butter and other products. Over 1,000 women have benefited from the transfer of knowledge and technology, to the extent that some women's groups were able to participate in an international cosmetic exhibition in Paris. A joint venture with a French cosmetics company has now been set up.

58. In 2010, the International Labour Conference decided that it would consider adopting a new international labour standard on decent work for domestic workers: a convention supplemented by a recommendation at the 2011 Conference. Domestic work has become one of the most important sources of labour for female migrant workers.

59. FAO and ILO promote and mainstream decent rural employment with a gender-sensitive approach. The Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools project strengthens the economic position of youth by facilitating the establishment of income-generating activities that can offer employment to young women.

60. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has taken active measures to close the implementation gap in gender equality in the maritime field. The International Maritime Law Institute now trains women to overcome attitudinal and environmental constraints and facilitate access to promotion. A number of IMO fellowships are also ring-fenced for female candidates.

61. WIPO increased its participation in and organization of meetings on women and intellectual property to contribute to improving public awareness of the importance of involving women in inventions and intellectual property rights. An assessment is under way to examine the gender sensitivity of tools used to support Member States in their national intellectual property strategies. It will also include recommendations to improve the collection of data disaggregated by sex across the spectrum of intellectual property activity.

62. On 11 March 2011, the World Tourism Organization and UN-Women launched the Global Report on Women in Tourism 2010, the first survey to map women's participation in the tourism sector worldwide. The report stresses that if tourism provides a wide range of income generation opportunities for women, they are often concentrated in low-skilled, low-paid and precarious jobs. It includes recommendations to close the gender gap, through gender-sensitive policies and integrating gender equality into corporate decisions.

63. The United Nations system is increasingly engaged in gender-related trade issues. Although the members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) have not yet decided on a specific mandate for addressing trade and gender issues, several practical steps and initiatives have been taken to integrate gender perspectives and thinking into WTO activities. The WTO secretariat is more and more engaged in gender-related trade issues, including through participation at senior management level in gender-oriented round tables. The participation of the secretariat in these events provides an enhanced level of visibility, while it is well understood that WTO rules and agreements are "neutral" in their language and focus.

64. As a joint agency of the United Nations and WTO, the International Trade Centre (ITC) is working to highlight the critical importance of gender mainstreaming in aid for trade as fundamental to effective resource allocation, and has showcased the role United Nations agencies can play in working with Member States on delivery. For example, in 2010, ITC partnered with WTO and organized an

expert round table on the gender dimension of aid for trade. The outcome of this meeting, which included experts from UNIFEM, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, was submitted to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and to the WTO Committee on Trade and Development, where members recommended that the third Global Aid for Trade Review, to take place in Geneva in July 2011, should include an increased focus on gender issues. Emphasis was also placed on the need to develop gender-sensitive indicators to track the use of aid for trade funds to ensure resources are available to close the implementation gap, as stressed in the ministerial declaration.

65. One area where the efforts of the United Nations system have been coordinated and have effected change has been through the Enhanced Integrated Framework. The Framework is a multi-donor programme helping the least developed countries play a more active role in the global trading system. The partner agencies of the Framework are the International Monetary Fund (IMF), ITC, UNCTAD, UNDP, the World Bank and WTO. Studies of trade diagnostics conducted under the Framework revealed too few references to gender issues in trade. This led to recommendations to change the Diagnostic Trade Integration Study template to adequately record where gender inequalities exist. A revised template was subsequently adopted and has been tested, yielding improved visibility of gender-based constraints in trade. ITC, at the request of the Framework secretariat, is developing training modules that explain the mainstreaming and targeted programming approaches that are expected to be rolled out in 2011-2012.

66. To effect change at the policymaking level, ITC has developed a gender-sensitive national export strategy methodology to assist countries to unleash women's trade potential. To help women's business organizations and associations connect members who are women business owners to global markets, ITC also leads an initiative that brings together corporations, Governments and organizations that have an interest in procuring from women vendors, with women vendors themselves. The Global Platform for Action on Sourcing from Women Vendors was adopted in Chongqing, China, in 2010 at the ITC World Export Development Forum. Platform membership is open and could operate as an entry point for beneficiaries of United Nations programmes that are export-ready, registered companies owned by women, to connect with potential buyers.

F. Measures to ensure that women and girls with disabilities are not subject to multiple or aggravated forms of discrimination

67. The attention paid by the United Nations system to women and girls with disabilities has increased since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. An Inter-Agency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is in place, but further work is needed to ensure that United Nations entities implement specific activities targeted towards that group. The recognition by the Economic and Social Council of its cross-cutting nature calls for the coordinated involvement of various entities.

68. Some United Nations entities have clearly recognized the specificity of the situation of women and girls with disabilities. UNICEF has been promoting further consideration of the issue of "intersectionality" where women and girls experience

gender discrimination alongside other forms of discrimination, such as that against those of indigenous or minority status, or those living with a disability. UNICEF has recently recruited a new senior disability adviser who will be placing an emphasis on girls living with disabilities. Within the Inter-Agency Support Group, UNFPA has also advocated that joint United Nations documents include a special focus on the needs and rights of women and girls with disabilities. ILO promotes entrepreneurship training that provides disabled women with the means to develop confidence and forge a pathway out of poverty for themselves and their families in Africa.

69. OHCHR presented its third thematic study on the rights of persons with disabilities to the sixteenth session of the Human Rights Council in March 2011. The report highlighted the fact that men's and women's experience of disability is context-specific. In this regard, mainstreaming disability and addressing multiple forms of discrimination is important if internationally agreed development goals are to be met. In response, the Human Rights Council, in resolution 16/15, encouraged all actors to give appropriate attention to gender issues, including the connection between gender and disability, in international cooperation efforts.

G. The crucial role and contribution of rural women, including indigenous women

70. The past year offered unprecedented opportunities for propelling the issue of rural women's economic empowerment high onto the international policy agenda and advancing the recognition of the role of rural women as agents of change and drivers of agriculture and food security. The ministerial declaration of the Economic and Social Council was an important step in this process. Consensus around these issues was translated into policy commitments in the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals,⁹ which recognizes rural women's contributions to agriculture and food security and the need for greater action to support their empowerment. In 2012, the Commission on the Status of Women will focus on the empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges as its priority theme, and is expected to further advance the global policy agenda on this topic.

71. Joint activities undertaken by FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP), including joint activities in the field of research, capacity development and advocacy, have contributed to this consensus-building.

72. A major recent endeavour was the FAO report "The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-2011",¹⁰ which focuses on women in agriculture and makes a case for the crucial role that women play in the overall success of agriculture and food security. According to the report, closing the gender gap in agriculture would lead to a 2.5 to 4 per cent increase in agricultural productivity at the national level and reduce the number of undernourished people in the world by between 12 and 17 per

⁹ See resolution 65/1.

¹⁰ Available at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e00.htm>.

cent, or 100-150 million people. The report critically evaluates experiences from several countries and offers policy measures.

73. A groundbreaking study by IFAD, FAO and ILO, released in January 2011 is the first comprehensive look at gender and work in rural areas since the start of the recent global economic crisis. The joint study entitled "Gender dimensions of agricultural and rural employment: differentiated pathways out of poverty — status, trends and gaps"¹¹ examines important but rarely addressed questions regarding the different tasks carried out by rural women and men, the livelihood challenges they face, and the policy responses needed to strengthen their role in rural development. The cornerstone of the analysis in the report is the United Nations Decent Work Agenda. The agencies also launched a set of seven new action-oriented policy briefs for practitioners and policymakers on key aspects of rural employment and decent work.

74. IFAD has given increased attention to gender relations — and power relations — at the household level. A new form of gender equality approach in agriculture and small-scale enterprises has focused on strengthening the complementarity of family-based production: helping husbands and wives become involved in improving agricultural production, thereby increasing productivity. The household approach has been especially powerful for quality improvements in agricultural value chains, where women are often traditionally responsible for post-harvest processing. When the improved productivity generates significant profits, it contributes to decreasing men's seasonal or permanent off-farm migration, thereby improving community viability.

75. Agencies have developed new tools to improve knowledge and policy options for rural women. Examples of these are:

(a) The FAO Agri-Gender Statistics Toolkit, a database for the collection and use of sex-disaggregated agricultural data, which enables individuals and organizations to determine what gender-sensitive agricultural data they require and how to collect and analyse them (<http://www.fao.org/gender/agrigender/en>);

(b) The FAO DIMITRA project "Rural women and development: networking and partnerships' skills strengthening in information management", operational in Africa, is a tool that enables rural women, through their associations and grass-roots organizations, to make their voices heard and to increase access to information;

(c) The gender-responsive agricultural development and enterprise community of practice, formed in 2010 and made up of individuals from diverse organizations, spearheaded by IFAD, the World Bank and WOCAN (Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management);

(d) The Network of Women Ministers and Leaders in Agriculture, which was engaged in supporting rural women's participation in Economic and Social Council events last year, including a high-level event as part of the 2010 annual ministerial review. Following this, the Network prepared a two-year strategic plan to strengthen rural women's leadership and participation in decision-making processes.

76. In 2010, a groundbreaking UNDP thematic guidebook entitled "Gender, Climate Change and Community-Based Adaptation" examined the factors which

¹¹ Available at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1638e/i1638e.pdf>.

exacerbate the impact of climate change on rural women and provided advice on how to mainstream gender into adaptation and mitigation initiatives at the community level.

77. With regard to indigenous women, in August 2010, FAO adopted a corporate policy on indigenous and tribal peoples, which was prepared through a collaborative effort involving indigenous representatives, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and other United Nations agencies. The policy promotes indigenous women's economic and social empowerment through its gender equality principle. UNDP increasingly works to promote indigenous women's political participation in democratic governance, particularly in Latin America.

78. UNESCO has promoted women's empowerment in the area of culture through discussions on an upcoming report on gender equality and culture, and on the development of a future UNESCO policy on engaging with indigenous peoples. UNFPA has also increased its work in this regard and in supporting access to quality health services for indigenous and ethnic minority women.

79. Based on the recognition of the important role played by women in biodiversity management and conservation of traditional knowledge, which are important sources of medicine and health care, WIPO has increased consultations with indigenous women's groups to determine the intellectual property needs and expectations of holders of traditional knowledge.¹²

H. The need to accelerate progress on women's health

80. The United Nations system is involved in a number of critical international partnerships (H4+, IHP+, H8, Harmonization for Health in Africa) that have been identified as both strategic and critical in taking forward and scaling up efforts in support of women's health, tackling weak health systems and fragmented donor processes.

81. A major step forward has been the launching of the Secretary-General's Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health at the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals in September 2010, which aims to support national plans and strategies relating to health issues, including improving women's health through integrated programmes for reduction of maternal and child mortality.

82. Within the United Nations system, UNFPA plays a key role in this field. Its Global Programme to Enhance Reproductive Health Commodity Security and the Maternal Health Thematic Fund directly contribute to this purpose. The global Midwifery Programme, launched by UNFPA, and the International Confederation of Midwives have both helped address the acute shortage of human resources for maternal health.

83. Other agencies have taken interesting initiatives in this field. For example, in collaboration with WHO, on 26 January 2011 ITU launched the Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health. The objective is to lead a process to propose a framework for global reporting, oversight and accountability on women's and children's health. Such a framework will help

¹² For example, see <http://www.wipo.int/women-and-ip/en/programs/tk.htm>.

countries to monitor where resources go and how they are spent, providing the evidence needed to show which programmes are the most effective in saving the lives of women and children.

84. OHCHR has been mandated by the Human Rights Council to prepare a second analytical compilation on good and effective practices to prevent maternal mortality and morbidity by September 2011. OHCHR has invited various stakeholders to provide input to this process.

85. The gender equality component of the UNAIDS strategy is operationalized through the UNAIDS Agenda for Accelerated Country Action for Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV, which was launched in 2010. Implementation progress is reported to the UNAIDS Board on a regular basis and represents a unique process of joint United Nations, civil society and Member State collaboration, and reporting on results achieved. Since its launch, over 56 United Nations joint teams have facilitated the roll-out of the UNAIDS Agenda, with the objective that by 2015, half of the responses on HIV are centred on gender equality and women's empowerment.

86. UNAIDS is increasingly taking AIDS out of isolation, to make HIV responses work for wider health and development goals and promote the achievement of Millennium Development Goals 3, 4, and 5. In 2010, UNAIDS joined the Health 4+ partnership¹³ of organizations. WHO has also taken practical steps to address the feminization of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, including by working on a gendered approach to the vulnerabilities of sex workers and female injecting drug users.

87. In 2010, ILO recommendation No. 200 concerning HIV/AIDS and the world of work was adopted. The recommendation calls for a wide range of measures to be taken in or through workplaces to reduce transmission of HIV and alleviate its impact. UNDP has engaged networks of women living with HIV/AIDS from 14 countries in Millennium Development Goals review processes.

88. As non-communicable diseases — mainly cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes — are among the leading cause of death for women in high- and middle-income countries, WHO has developed a number of tools to tackle these issues, such as the MPower package of six cost-effective policy interventions related to tobacco control, diet and physical activity, alcohol abuse and preventive measures. A high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases will be held on 19-20 September 2011, in New York. Building on the commitment of Heads of State and Government to scale up action in this field, the United Nations system will be expected to ensure that the response to non-communicable diseases among women is placed at the forefront of efforts to close the implementation gap.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

89. This report testifies to the positive momentum within the United Nations system to promote a more robust and better coordinated agenda for gender equality and the empowerment of women. More efforts are under way in different sectors to reduce the implementation gap, as called for in the Economic and Social Council ministerial declaration. The creation of UN-Women is an opportunity for the whole

¹³ UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, the World Bank and UNAIDS.

system to scale up its efforts and increase the visibility of these issues. In this regard, the Council may wish to stress the following elements:

(a) The establishment of UN-Women is both a much-needed enhancement of the capacity of the United Nations system to champion gender equality and the empowerment of women and a pioneering effort by a United Nations entity that supports both global normative processes and operational activities at country level;

(b) UN-Women, as a composite entity, represents a new way of doing business in the United Nations and therefore requires innovative and flexible means of support, including financial support, by different stakeholders;

(c) The commitment of UN-Women to work with the United Nations system through existing coordination mechanisms will contribute to promoting system-wide coherence;

(d) As called for by CEB, UN-Women has an important role to play in developing an action plan for an operational accountability framework for the United Nations system, including in its efforts at country level, through the Resident Coordinator system and country teams.

90. In this context, it is important that all relevant actors focus on key lessons learned and good practices, in order to achieve concrete progress for women and girls in line with implementation of the ministerial declaration of 2010. Summarized below are some areas for further work to be undertaken by the relevant United Nations body as appropriate, with the support of Governments and other stakeholders, such as civil society and the private sector. Institutional steps to be taken by the United Nations system in this endeavour are contained in the report on gender mainstreaming also submitted to the Council.

(a) Gender equality is not only a goal in its own right, but an essential means for achieving all the Millennium Development Goals. Making poverty reduction strategies and economic policies benefit women and men equally will accelerate progress towards the Goals. This requires the full and equal participation of women in all political and economic decision-making processes;

(b) Priority should be given to better linking girls' and women's educational gains with employment opportunities, including in new and non-traditional fields, by expanding the scope of education opportunities; supporting women's business, trade, ICT and entrepreneurial skills; providing access to job search support services; providing social protection; and promoting reconciliation of work and family responsibilities for women and men;

(c) Urgent action is needed to implement a systematic and comprehensive approach aimed at eliminating all forms of violence against women, including in humanitarian settings. Such action should include an increased focus on prevention, and training of public officials, in particular law enforcement officials and health service providers, to effectively support victims/survivors, and to address the link between HIV/AIDS and violence against women;

(d) More proactive measures are needed to put an end to discriminatory practices and gender stereotypes which perpetuate unequal power relations between men and women, resulting in unequal sharing of responsibilities and inequalities in access to resources and decision-making, and limiting both women and men in achieving their full potential;

(e) A stronger engagement of men and boys is indispensable for gender equality and the empowerment of women; special efforts are needed to mobilize civil society organizations working on male engagement for gender equality;

(f) Efforts to promote decent work for rural women are urgently needed in areas such as access to productive resources, credit and technology;

(g) Increased investment in gender equality and the empowerment of women should be included in all responses to the financial crisis, including recovery and stimulus packages. Appropriate mechanisms should be in place to ensure that domestic and international resources and support reach women. Responses to rising and volatile food prices need to consistently integrate a gender perspective so as to prevent a disproportionate impact on women;

(h) Collection of data and analysis of multiple factors of discrimination are needed to ensure that public policies can be effectively targeted to reach marginalized populations of women, including older women, migrant women, indigenous women and women with disabilities;

(i) Increased investment in well-functioning health systems and empowering women and communities to access them, including through scaling up of maternal mortality reduction strategies and strengthening family planning programmes is key for achieving a number of the Millennium Development Goals;

(j) There is a need to promote increased attention to the gender dimension in responses to non-communicable diseases.